



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.  
Mark 1:14-20, 35-39

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English Standard Version

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## *“Seek and Find”*

The 2nd Sermon in a series on The Gospel of Mark entitled  
*“The King and His Cross”*

**Mark 1:14-20**, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” <sup>16</sup> Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” <sup>18</sup> And immediately they left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup> And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him.”

**Mark 1:35-39**, “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed. <sup>36</sup> And Simon and those who were with him searched for Him, <sup>37</sup> and they found Him and said to Him, “Everyone is looking for You.” <sup>38</sup> And He said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” <sup>39</sup> And He went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.”

*Heavenly Father, this is Your Word and we need it. We know what the Gospel is, but we doubt the power of the Gospel to change our lives. And we know who Jesus is, but we are not so*

*amazed that we'll drop everything to follow Him. Lord, forgive us and prepare us to be Your disciples. Teach us to be faithful to Christ and obedient to Your Word. We need to know how to follow Christ. We need to know how to trust. We need to know how to fish. We need to know how to pray. Thank You that today we're learning from John Mark, the protégé of the Apostle Peter and follower of Jesus, as he brings us the earliest eyewitness account of the life of Christ. Help us to hear it, understand it, believe it, and obey it. And so we pray, speak through the Gospel of Mark this morning, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, help us see Jesus, in His name we pray, amen.*

### **INTRODUCTION: Good News or Fake news? <sup>1</sup>**

Odds are, you're not willing to **trust** a good portion of the American media today. In fact, there isn't a whole lot of **trust** happening anywhere in our society anymore, as the General Social Survey reports that only 30% of Americans agreed with the statement that "*most people can be **trusted**.*" And while **trust** in our neighbors is decreasing, and **trust** in the government is at historic lows, it is the news media which has taken the biggest hit. No one feels they can **trust** the media anymore. Conservatives have zero **trust** in CNN or MSNBC, just as liberals have no **trust** in Fox News. That's astounding when you think about it. **Half** the country thinks the other half is producing and consuming news and information that is **misinformed** and **unreliable**, and **vice versa**. So, why do we have such a hard time **trusting**? Why do we **lack confidence** in others and in our institutions? Why are we **suspicious** of intentions, motives, or outcomes? The key factor, say most Americans, is the fairly recent phenomenon of so-called "**fake news**." According to a 2018 Gallup study, more than 80% of Americans "believe the news media have an important role to play in democracy," but at the same time nearly 75% agree that **fake news** is crippling the important role of that same media — even though most Americans disagree on what constitutes **fake news**!

Thus our society has been said to be suffering from "**Truth Decay**." The result of this **Truth Decay** is suspicion, uncertainty, and alienation from one another and from institutions. When truth goes, **trust** goes. And yet, almost everyone agrees that **trust** is a fundamental social capital, and as Christians we should **lament** its decline. But even as the integrity of our news outlets seems to erode before our very eyes – even as we are inundated with **fake news** – we must never let our faith waiver regarding what we know to be reliable, **trustworthy**, and true: **and that's the Gospel**.

The word "**Gospel**" literally means "**Good News**." The Greek word is *euangelion*, where we get our word '**evangel**' from, which is the root word of '**evangelism**.' It's the message that the soldier brings from the front lines that the army has been victorious and the war is over! Jesus Christ has come and conquered sin and death – the war is over, and now we have peace with God. We must receive this news **with faith**, which requires **trust**. It's not a blind faith – Reformed theology has traditionally used a threefold definition of faith as knowledge, assent, and **trust**. There must be factual information that's first of all **known**, secondly we must **assent** to it or agree with it, before, third, we can **trust** it or put meaningful faith in it. So what things must we **know** to increase our **trust** in the **Good News** ... in an age of **fake news**?

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**1 The Introduction is adapted from** "*Trusting the Good News in the Age of Fake News*" by Rev. Jonathan Cruse, Pastor, Community Presbyterian Church (OPC), Kalamazoo, MI, 9/7/19, [www.reformation21.org](http://www.reformation21.org).

We start with the simple but profound truth: This **Good News** comes from God. Everything else will be based upon this reality. The reason the **Biblical Gospel** is **Good News** worth believing is because it originates from God ... and it's not the invention of men. You'll remember this is Paul's primary argument for why the Galatian church should believe the news that he announces to them, **Galatians 1:11-12**, "*For I would have you know, brothers, that the **gospel** that was preached by me is not man's **gospel**. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*" The **Gospel** originates in the eternal counsel of the Triune God, not in a 60-second report during the nightly news. Because it comes from God ... **it is true**. God deals with **that which is fact**, not that which is fake. As truth continues to decay in our society, we can't let that cause us to **doubt the truthfulness** of God.

When the Devil speaks, he reveals his deceitful character, **John 8:44**, "*He [the Devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.*" However, when God speaks He reveals His **truthful** character. And where there is truth, there can be **trust**. The Scriptures repeatedly affirm God's **truthfulness** — Both in the Old Testament, **Psalm 86:11**, "*Teach me Your way, O LORD, that I may walk in Your **truth**; unite my heart to fear Your name.*" And in the New Testament, **Romans 15:8**, "*For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show **God's truthfulness**, in order to confirm the promises ...*"

The majority of **fake news** is produced just to stir up people's anger. The main purpose seems to be to divide our society even more. Sadly, there are those who find pleasure in stirring the pot, and sometimes we have (unwittingly) been stirred up with it. And rather than being **engaged** with the world around them, people get **enraged** at it ... and often for **misinformed** reasons. Then, when people eventually realize they've been misinformed, their tendency is more **anger** and less **trust** in any information offered to them. We become more isolated because we don't want to risk being burned again.

Not so with the Christian **Gospel**. Consider what the Apostle John writes near the conclusion of his account, **John 20:30-31**, "*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but **these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.***" God's **Gospel**, declared by His apostles, prophets, and preachers, isn't given to divide people. It isn't to stir the pot. It certainly isn't to mislead. God declares His **Good News SO THAT** people would believe it, and in believing receive eternal life in His name. This news is unique in that it's giving the world the **facts** necessary to live forever.

What could be more important than that? Remember that as we open up **Mark 1**, our text for today ... God's desire is that we would be informed, that we would know, that we would learn, that we would **trust**. All of Scripture is given that we would believe the **facts** of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. When we feel that **trust** is in short supply, we can turn to God's Word which never fails. Even in an age of suspicion and doubt, this is something we can bank on. The Apostle Paul says in **1 Timothy 1:15**, "*The saying is **trustworthy** and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.*" The **Gospel** deserves our acceptance. It is worthy of our **trust**. Why? Because it's **true**. And we should receive it with whole-hearted faith.

And the **beautiful** thing – and the **important** thing needed today – is that once we embrace this **Good News** in faith, we are equipped to confront a world of lies and deception with the **truth** of God. We can, and must, go out and share something stable and foundational to a people living precariously in a fragile world of **mistrust** and **misinformation**. They need **truth**, they need **Good News**, and we've been called to give it to them. After all, that's ...

#### v. 14-15: THE KING'S MESSAGE<sup>2</sup>

Now, you have to understand, Mark is just giving us a summary. Actually, **almost a year has gone by since verse 13**, the last events Mark recorded, which we looked at last week, the baptism of Jesus and the temptation in the wilderness. According to the Gospel of John, Jesus had gone back to Galilee, come back down to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and then went north again through Samaria, where He had that conversation with the woman at the well. And so now, **almost a year's gone by**. Mark doesn't actually tell us that – we only know that from the other gospels. So now, we're back up in Galilee. John the Baptist has been imprisoned; his life is almost over. The reason for his being here has been eclipsed by the coming of the King, and it's time for Jesus to begin His preaching ministry. It's taken some time, hasn't it? Jesus is thirty-years-old and we know His public ministry only lasts three years. So He needs to get with it, right?

Let's stop and think about that for a minute ... the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at His baptism. That was **a year ago** and very little has transpired in that year. Jesus has gone up to Galilee. He's attended a wedding. He met a woman at a well. You know something? **God isn't in a hurry**. **God Isn't In A Hurry**. There's nothing of a marketing strategy about the way Jesus brings about His Kingdom. There's no announcement by Jesus of some sure-fire, guaranteed formula of success in the work of building the Kingdom.

Now we'll see over and over again in the course of this gospel (as we see it in all four gospels) that Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world, and He builds His Kingdom using different principles and methods than the world uses. And Mark emphasizes that. Mark is very **intentional** in what he tells us about Jesus. Now in this text, in this Galilean ministry ... Jesus is establishing Himself **as King**. Everything we see in **Mark 1** has to do with establishing Jesus as the King.

And what does the King say? We start at **verse 14**, "*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,<sup>15</sup> and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."* The King's message has three points ... so very Presbyterian ... First, Jesus says, "**The time is fulfilled**" ... and this turning point has to do with His coming into the world and beginning His ministry. He's talking about something that the Old Testament's been anticipating **for hundreds of years** and has finally arrived. God isn't in a hurry.

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**2 The Introduction and Exposition of the text is adapted from the sermons, "Gone Fishing!" 2/8/04 and "Keeping Quiet about Jesus?" 2/15/04, both by Dr. Derek Thomas, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church (ARP), Columbia, SC preached at First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS; "A Day in the Life" by Dr. David Strain, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church (PCA), Jackson, MS, 6/3/18, [www.fpcjackson.org](http://www.fpcjackson.org); "Called to the Kingdom" 1/18/06; "Called to Be Disciples" 1/22/06; and "Prayer, Word, and Deed" 2/5/06, all by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, *The Tim Keller Sermon Archive*, Logos Bible Software 8.7. **And the book, Preaching the Word – Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior** by Dr. R. Kent Hughes, pages 33-38, 48-51.**

John Stott has a great little book called **Why I Am a Christian**. All John Stott's books are great. Anyway, he's replying to the philosopher Bertrand Russell who in 1927, wrote a very famous book **Why I Am an Atheist**. John Stott was 6-years-old when it came out. He wrote his reply when he was 82. He died in 2011 at the age of 90. So it wasn't a quick reply. He said it took him a lifetime to reply ... because he said he needed a lifetime's reflection and a lifetime's discipleship in the kingdom of God. God isn't in a hurry.

And his first reason for writing **Why I Am a Christian** ... is this text. **This text**. It's the fact that **the first thing Jesus said** was that 'History has a turning point in Me. All of the Old Testament in terms of its prophecies and anticipation has reached its culmination in Me.' Jesus was conscious of that. You remember later He will go into the synagogue (recorded in **Luke 4**) and He will read part of **Isaiah 61**. And when He's finished reading, He'll roll up the scroll, sit down, and say, **Luke 4:21**, "*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*" He's using the same word as **Mark 1**. The message of Jesus is that all of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Him, in Jesus the King, and in no one else. It's fulfilled in Him and Him alone. The time is fulfilled.

**The second point** of the King's message is that *the kingdom of God is at hand*. His message was all about the kingdom of God. There's a sense in which the entirety of the gospel of Jesus can be summed up in that little phrase, "*The Kingdom of God.*" It's all about the kingdom. Jesus is saying, 'All of the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Me, and the message that I come to proclaim is the message of the kingdom of God.' That expression ... "*the kingdom of God*" ... only occurs seven times in the Old Testament, mostly in the Psalms. But you know there's a sense in which the whole Old Testament is about the kingdom of God. It's about the rule of God, the kingship of God, the dominion of God, the sovereignty of God, that God is establishing **His gospel** in **Genesis 3:15**, that "*the seed of the woman would crush the head of Satan,*" and from then on we see the King building His kingdom. **And Jesus is saying, 'The kingdom of God has come. It's at hand. It's here.'** In the coming of Jesus Christ something of the fulfillment of God's plan, God's design, God's decree has now come.

Some of you know that we talk of the "*already, but not yet*" and this is a good example of that. Because there's a sense in which the kingdom of God has **yet** to come. Don't we pray in the Lord's prayer, "*Thy kingdom come*"? And we want to see the kingdom of God, the rule of God, the sovereignty of God being stretched from shore to shore until that great day when Jesus in all of His glory will come again on the clouds of Heaven with the trumpet of God and the sound of the archangel. So there's a sense in which the kingdom is yet to come (*the not yet*), but Jesus is saying there's a another sense (*the already*) in which the kingdom has now arrived in the person of Jesus Christ. The rule of God, the dominion of God, the sovereignty of God, is found in Jesus Christ ... **and it has now come**.

The third point of His message is **the command to repent and believe** – to repent and believe **in the gospel**. But the two go together – repentance and faith – not one without the other. Repentance and faith **always go together**. Jesus comes into the world; He begins His public ministry; and the first words out of His mouth are that **you need** to be changed, that **you need** to turn, that **you need** to change your mind and your heart and your ways and your attitudes and your habits. His first words are that there's something radically wrong that needs to change, and **you need** to believe in the **gospel** and believe in the promise of God and to **trust** Christ and He is freely offered in the **gospel**. **That's the King's message**. It's a simple message. It's a

message about the rule and dominion and sovereignty of God that finds expression in this message of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. That's the message of Jesus. That's what He comes proclaiming. But then we have to ask, "Who's He talking to? Who's hearing this? And who's responding to His message?" And that brings us to ...

#### **v. 16-20: THE KING'S DISCIPLES**

*<sup>16</sup> Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." <sup>18</sup> And immediately they left their nets and followed Him. <sup>19</sup> And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup> And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him."*

Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee and He sees Simon (who He'll later call Peter) and his brother Andrew. Now it isn't that these men had never seen Jesus before. According to John's **gospel**, they saw Him right after His baptism ... last year. The disciples already knew Him. You may remember that Jesus had already called Andrew and Andrew had followed Him and actually gone to the place where Jesus was staying. No doubt over the months that have transpired these disciples have pondered and thought and deliberated as to who Jesus was, so that now they see Jesus again ... back up in Galilee. And **He calls** them. And so this invitation by the lake, it isn't a sudden invitation. They've had a year to learn about Him. So now, **a year later**, He's walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and He sees Simon and Andrew and then James and John.

**He calls** two sets of brothers. More than that, **He calls** four fishermen. Why not four lawyers? How about Doctors? Nope. He's the divine healer; He had no use for doctors. You might have thought He would have called four teachers from the synagogues of northern Galilee, someone whom He could take to Jerusalem. Nope ... **four fishermen** ... and I know it's easy to downplay the education of these men, but remember, these men wrote the New Testament and they wrote some things that are hard to be understood. And Peter says that about Paul, but you can read some things in Peter that are hard to be understood too. By the Spirit, these men were transformed. Jesus takes them from their vocations, from their day-to-day, ordinary lives, and **He calls** them to be His **disciples**. And as we'll find out in the rest of Mark, and in the Book of Acts, and throughout the New Testament, **He calls** men of rugged determination. **He calls** them because of their character. **He calls** them because He sees something in them that you and I may not see.

Now this call has two parts. It's a **call**, first of all, **to follow Jesus**, to follow Him. Before you can do anything for Jesus, **you need** to know Him. **You need** to know what He thinks. **You need** to know His priorities. **You need** to know what His opinions are on this, that, and the other. **You need** to sit at His feet. **You need** to listen. **You need** to commune with Him. **You need** to talk with Him. **You need** to ponder His words and His actions. **You need** to allow Him to instruct you. **You need** to love Him and be prepared to say, "Wherever you lead I will follow." Think about it: they were fishermen. That's what they did. That's the level of their expertise. And Jesus is going **to change their lives**. Jesus is going to raise some of these disciples ... to positions of incredible influence. Think of Simon Peter on the day of Pentecost, preaching the **gospel** of Jesus Christ with all of his heart. He's gone through a lot. He's going to be one of God's instruments in turning the world upside down. I imagine Peter would say for the

rest of his life ... you know, he'd have one of those moments and he would say, *'I'm just a fisherman from Galilee. That's all I am, but by the grace of God He called me to follow Him.'*

And it was a **call to be fishers of men**. Here they are with their nets. And you can see this idyllic picture with the sea lapping on the rocks of the shore of the Sea of Galilee with fishing boats and fishing nets, and Jesus is saying to them, ***"I will make you become fishers of men."*** How does Jesus make fishers of men? And we can answer that question by asking, "How were Simon and Andrew and James and John made fishers of fish?" And the answer, of course, is simple: **through watching their fathers**, over a long period of time, learning the ins and outs of fishing. There's something here that's profound ... because Jesus is saying, *"Look, if you follow Me, if you sit at My feet, if you listen to what I say, if you watch what I do – I'll make you fishers of men. Learn from Me. I'll instruct you about evangelism. I'll tell you how you witness to other people."*

And what happened? They watched Him talk to a rich, young ruler and watched that guy go away sad because he loved riches more than he loved Jesus, and they learned something about evangelism. They watched Jesus talk to a woman at the well. And they watched the King of Kings and Lord of Lords bring that woman down and down and down, exposing her sinfulness and her need and then drawing her to Himself. And they learned. They watched and listened as Jesus spoke to one of the greatest preachers of the day, Nicodemus, in Jerusalem. He was known as a great spokesman, a great preacher, a great expositor, and Jesus spoke to him and said, ***"You must be born again."*** And they watched and they listened. They watched as He spoke to more than 5,000 people on the side of a hill, and they learned how to become fishers of men. They learned from His example. They learned from His teaching and they learned what kind of fishermen Jesus employs in the work of spreading His kingdom: fisherman who are poor in spirit and who mourn over their sins and who are meek and who are pure in heart and are peacemakers and hunger and thirst for righteousness and are persecuted for righteousness sake. They responded to the King's message and so became the King's disciples ... but there's a third thing I want us to see and that is ...

#### **v. 35-39: THE KING'S POWER <sup>3</sup>**

<sup>35</sup> *And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed.* <sup>36</sup> *And Simon and those who were with him searched for Him,* <sup>37</sup> *and they found Him and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."* <sup>38</sup> *And He said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."* <sup>39</sup> *And He went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons."*

Early in the morning, Jesus gets up when it's still dark, and He goes to pray. What a beautiful thing that is. We could pause there and reflect on that for the rest of the day: Jesus, the Son of God, the Lord of glory, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the One who casts out demons and heals people with a word ... still needs to pray ... and we think we don't. So why did Jesus need to pray? I mean, after all, wasn't He God? Well, I guess it depends on what He was praying for. We know from elsewhere in the gospels that He often prayed for Himself. We know that He prayed for His disciples. And we know that He prayed for the people around Him, the people He would be preaching to, and healing, and delivering, and calling.

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**3** Comments about prayer from E. Stanley Jones come from his book, *A Song of Ascents*, page 383.

The great Christian writer, E. Stanley Jones, once described prayer as “*time exposure to God.*” He used the analogy of his life being like a photographic plate which, when exposed to God, progressively bore the image of God in keeping with the length of exposure. Jesus exposed His humanity to God, even though the whole fullness of God dwelt in Him, already being the exact imprint of His nature. He was refreshed as His light was exposed to the Father’s light, His purity to the Father’s purity, His holiness to the Father’s holiness, His life to the Father’s Life.

But there was also a human reason for Jesus’ prayers, remember that though Jesus was God, He didn’t live apart from the Father, but rather as a man in dependence upon God. He said, **John 14:10**, “*Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does His works.*” Jesus depended upon the Father for His power! One of the reasons Jesus did this was because He wants us to live our lives on the same basis. If Jesus prayed in order to live a godly life full of kingdom power, so should we! Jesus is the eternal God Incarnate, the Creator of all, who, **Hebrews 1:3**, “*... is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.*” Yet, He still lived by prayer. Christ lived in oneness with the Father, but He still needed regular times of prayer.

Prayer is the great necessity of our spiritual lives. We need to pray! We need to find times to get alone with God. We need to get up early if necessary. Few of us are called to spend hours in prayer, but **all** of us need to spend **some** time in prayer. Pray while you’re in the car. Pray while you’re walking the dog. Pray while you’re cooking meals. Pray while you’re getting dressed in the morning. It’d be great if everyone could find time to be silent and still, but that doesn’t work for a lot of people. But there’s something you do every day, and you can pray while you do it. Because prayer is where the power comes from.

And finally, one last thing. Notice here that Simon is *searching*. What a great word. Sometimes it’s translated as *hunting*. He’s *hunting* for Jesus, *searching* for Him, and saying to Him, perhaps with some indignation, “*Everyone is looking for You.*” And Jesus says, ‘Well then, let’s go somewhere else.’ It’s not the answer you’re expecting, is it? Lots of unexpected things here. And they go off throughout the regions of Galilee and they visit synagogues and Jesus preaches, because that’s what He’s come to do: to preach and to assert His authority over the kingdom of darkness. **He exercises the power He gained through prayer.**

You can come here on Sunday mornings, to Sunday School and Worship, and you can come to Youth Group. And you can come to Community Group, and to Women’s Bible Study, and you can come to a whole variety of meetings and ministries – but do you **pray** for any of those things? When Christians gather, we want that group, that meeting, that ministry to do powerful things in the lives of others, right? Jesus models that the exercise of power in the Christian life is gained through the Christian prayer life. And you when you pray, you’ll find that you can hear Jesus speak out of His word with the voice of a sovereign God, and you can know the truth, and you can share in the Holy Spirit and you can taste of the powers of the Word of God and the goodness of the Word of God. And when you do that, you’ll find more and more that **you just trust Jesus.**

**CONCLUSION: *Gone Fishin’*<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> Parts of the conclusion are adapted from the books Why I Am A Christian, page 132 and The Radical Disciple, pages 134-135, both by one of my heroes, the late Dr. John R.W. Stott.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew, James and John, He used his artistic tongue. He borrowed the idea of fishing and spins a metaphor to capture the imagination of these fishermen, **“Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”** Though the two sets of brothers didn’t yet know what that entailed, they knew enough to follow. So they left their nets of many years and followed Jesus along the shore. I can imagine their sign, several days later, still hung outside their door in the village: **“Gone Fishin’.”** It was still true — but with different kinds of nets and for a different kind of fish. The metaphor is still a strong picture for us today, even those of us who live in a world of corporations, concrete, sound bytes, and email. A simple return to the words of Jesus and His fishing metaphor reminds us once again that one of our tasks is to help fish people out of the ocean of confusion, folly, and rebellion, despite all the trappings of modern life.

God has called many fishermen since Peter and Andrew, James and John. He called a German named Martin Luther, and a Frenchman named John Calvin, and an American named Jonathan Edwards. But He didn’t just call great theologians. He also called an Egyptian girl named Sandy Supplee, a Japanese boy named Satoshi Kawachi, an Indian girl named Jemima Jegar, and a big kid from Kentucky named Matthew DeLong (those are all missionaries we support).

And God called an Englishman named John Stott, born in 1921. And while a schoolboy, during the Great Depression, he responded to God’s call. Twenty years later, in 1958, the year I was born, he wrote a book called **Basic Christianity**. He revised and updated it in 1971. It was his second book. He eventually wrote more than 50 books, of which I own 45. His writing culminated in **The Radical Disciple**, published in 2010, when he was 88 years old. It would be his last book. And in 1974, the year I became a Christian, I was given a copy of **Basic Christianity**. It was given to me by a youth group leader who said, “Read it. I think you’ll find it interesting.” So I did ... and it was like a lightning bolt from heaven. Forty-five years ago ... my life hasn’t been the same since, because God raised up John Stott as a fisherman so that God’s hook might be brought into this sinful soul. We cannot conclude better than to hear and heed the words of Jesus in the Upper Room, **John 13:13**, *“You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.”* He who claims to be both Son of God and Savior and Judge of all people now stands before us offering, if only we come to Him, fulfillment, freedom, and rest. His invitation is not just to know of Him, but to actually follow Him. Such an invitation from such a person cannot lightly be dismissed. He waits patiently for your response. You may want to pray first. After all, He’s never in a hurry. Take time to pray, and then I’ll close.

*Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have spoken to us by Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. Lord Jesus, we don’t know how to **trust** You. We’re not very good at **trusting** anyone. You are calling us, but we don’t hear very well, forgive us. Help us to come to You as Savior, submit to You as Lord, and follow You as King. Give us strength to follow you for the rest of our lives. And so work in each of us this year as we live with Mark, a follower of Jesus, as we hear what he hears, given to him by eyewitnesses of Christ. Thank You for this extraordinary story. Thank You for the glimpses we get of Jesus in all of His beauty, compassion, power, tenderness, gentleness, and sternness. Give us, we pray, soft hearts that want to do whatever Jesus asks us to do. Teach us to respond with a greater **trust** in You, and in Your Word, and in this **Gospel**, to draw us ever closer to Your Son, our*

*Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.*

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### **1 Timothy 1:15-17**

*“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”*