

Fishing and Following

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Jeff Kriesel. For those who haven't met me before, I'm the RUF campus minister at the Air Force Academy.

I'm also an Army Reserve chaplain out here at Fort Carson. It's my joy to be here this morning to bring God's word to God's people here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church and on the first Sunday of 2019.

So happy new year. You know, everyone approaches the new year very differently. Some people throw parties.

They pop champagne. They put on those cheesy New Year's glasses, you know, like the ones that are made with the numbers. They're so cheesy. Don't wear those. Other people, they're indifferent. They head to bed at 9 p.m. They open a book. They put on their reading glasses. They don't really care so much for the party. Some people are really optimistic.

[1 : 03] Some people are really pessimistic. Some people go into the new year knowing pretty much exactly what to expect. Other people, they have no idea what the next year will hold. I think of the soldiers here at Fort Carson that are deploying this next month.

Some for the first time. They have no idea what this next year will hold. Some people love to make idealistic New Year's resolutions. Like, this year I'm going to lose 100 pounds.

I'm going to swim with dolphins. I'm going to climb Mount Everest or maybe Pikes Peak or something. I'm like, all right, buddy. We'll see. Other people don't make resolutions.

They are completely content with their familiar routines. They are thinking, if it ain't broke, why fix it? And finally, there are some people who treat the New Year as like their year of atonement.

They treat it as like their fresh start. As if like the mere shift from one year to the next has the power to cover your sins and cover all of your burdens.

[2 : 09] They think to themselves, I really made a mess out of my life in 2018. But now I have a blank slate. I have a fresh start. 2019. Yes. In 2019, all of my 2018 mistakes are behind me.

They're gone. Others, on the other hand, they view the New Year as their year of judgment. They think to themselves, my good luck is going to run out in 2019.

They think to themselves, this is the year that I'm exposed. This is the year that people find out who I really am. This is the year that I'm exposed as a poor spouse or a bad parent or a dishonest employee or a hypocritical Christian.

This is the year. In 2019, all of my 28 mistakes are going to be revealed. And far too often, we view these two approaches as our only options as we head into the New Year.

We either treat the New Year as our savior. And so we try to put all of our mistakes and our burdens on its back. Burdens that a year can't handle, that a year can't carry.

[3 : 26] Or we treat the New Year as a judge. So we try to hide our sins from the bench of the New Year. But once again, these are sins that a year cannot judge.

Our passage this morning gives us a third option. A better option. An option that invites us to follow the savior and the judge of every year. The one who sees our sins from the bench, yet bore our burdens on the cross.

The one who changes our New Year's resolutions. And the one who changes our daily Christian rhythm. Okay. So we'll be looking at Luke 5, verses 1-11.

And if you are willing and able, I invite you to stand for the reading of God's holy, inspired, and sufficient word for us this morning. Luke 5, verses 1-11.

And let's read about this rhythm. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.

[4 : 56] And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish.

And their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats so that they began to sink. But 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 that they had taken. And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, Do not be afraid.

From now on you will be catching men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. Let me pray. Gracious and good Heavenly Father, we pray that your Holy Spirit will move in our midst this morning, that you will convict us where we need to be convicted.

Teach us what we don't know. Encourage us where we need to be encouraged. We pray, Lord, that you will evangelize the deepest parts of our hearts that need to be reached with the gospel.

[6 : 08] Thank you for Jesus, for his work on the cross. And it's through his name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. In our family, there is no clear line between religion and fishing.

This is the first sentence in one of my favorite books of all time, *A River Runs Through It*. Or if you're a movie fan, in 1992, Brad Pitt. It's an awesome movie.

If you haven't seen it, go see it. *A River Runs Through It*. It's by a guy named Norman Maclean. It's a semi-autobiographical book. The book is about two rebellious brothers named Norman and Paul. And these two boys, they just happen to be the sons of the town's Presbyterian minister. And so, like every good Presbyterian child here this morning, these boys spent a great deal of their time memorizing and reciting the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

So much fun, right? But between their study sessions, their father would give them a different sort of instruction. He would take them to the nearest river, and he would fly fish with his boys.

[7 : 22] On the banks of the big Blackfoot River in western Montana, these wild boys, they learned their father's four-count fly fishing rhythm as he clapped his hands behind their head like a dance choreographer.

One, two, three, four, while they fish. You see, their father was a master fisherman. And he was teaching his sons his master fishing rhythm.

But their dad wasn't only a master fisherman. He was also a master Presbyterian. So he knew that his boys were by nature a complete mess. Their hearts were corrupt.

They were stubborn. They were full of pride. They thought they knew what was best. And so their father knew that his sons would try to create their own rhythm. And that's exactly what they did. The boys thought they could fish however they wanted to fish.

They could create their own rhythm. However, they soon found out that their rhythm didn't result in many fish. And so day after day, Norman and Paul, they would fail to catch any fish.

[8 : 30] And they would get frustrated. They would get irritated with both their father and the fish. You see, without their father's four-count fishing rhythm, fishing wasn't fun.

It wasn't fun. It brought them no joy. In fact, fishing became a burden to the boys. But over time, they began to follow their father's instruction. And soon enough, his four-count rhythm became their four-count rhythm.

And they, too, became master fishermen, just like their dad. In our passage this morning, Luke takes us to the banks of the Sea of Galilee.

And he teaches us the four-count fishing rhythm of our Heavenly Father for the Christian life. But like Norman and Paul, we think we know best.

We're stubborn. We're full of pride. We think that we can create our own rhythm instead. And as a result, we begin to grow impatient.

[9 : 34] We begin to grow impatient with our Heavenly Father. And we become increasingly irritated with all the fish. We think to ourselves, I'm trying.

I really want to be a witness to others. I want to make disciples of all nations. I want to be a fisher of men. I want to see the gospel go out.

But it's not working. Why would God providentially place all of these people in my life, whether at home, at work, where I play, why would he place these people in my life if they don't care about the gospel?

They don't even want to listen. They don't seem to care. They don't want to be caught by God's grace. When a Christian starts to feel like evangelism, like the Christian life as a whole is more of a burden than a life-giving privilege, they will try to make their own rhythm instead.

They'll try to come up with their own strategies. They'll try to come up with their own plans. And my friends, in our family, the church, the Christian family, there is no clear line between religion and fishing.

[10:52] In fact, I would argue that there is no line at all between religion and fishing. To follow means to fish, and to fish means to follow. You can't follow Jesus and refuse to fish.

Here's the thing. You can't fish however you want. The Christian life has a foundational, God-given rhythm. Okay? And this rhythm must become our rhythm in 2019 if we are to become master fishermen like Jesus in the new year.

All right, so the one count of this fishing rhythm is to hear God's word. This is the one count of the Christian rhythm. We are to be a people who take the same posture as these people, these Israelites in Luke 5, people who are pressing into Jesus.

They're pressing into him to hear Jesus speak. These are people who are hungry for God's word. They craved it. They were desperate to be close to Jesus.

So much, in fact, that they push Jesus onto a boat. Jesus has to get on a boat in order to create some distance, some separation, so he can teach them effectively.

[12:04] These folks were desperate for God's word. Is this your posture as you head into 2019? Are you pressing into Jesus?

Is this a part of your daily rhythm? Do you hunger for God's word? Are you desperate to be near him? Do you think that's a part of your life? Do you think that's a part of your life? The Christian rhythm always starts with hearing God's word.

Just think back on your conversion, okay? We live in Colorado Springs. There's beautiful mountains right behind us. You didn't come to faith by simply looking at these beautiful mountains, and then all of a sudden, you just came to your senses and put your faith in a Savior you had never heard about.

The heavens declare the glory of God. Those mountains declare the glory of God. But they are not sufficient to save. You had to hear God's word first.

You also didn't come to faith by simply watching another Christian, be it a parent or a friend, a sibling, a neighbor, live this beautiful Christian life.

[13:16] And it caught your attention. It caught your attention. You noticed something about them. They were living differently. Maybe you noticed their hospitality or their generosity or their purity.

Or maybe you noticed their joy or their hope. You noticed something about them, and it was attractive to you. And so you came, and you wanted to start a conversation.

You see, all of those great attributes, I call it the beautiful life. The Christian life and the beautiful life are synonymous terms, by the way. The Christian life is the beautiful life. But those attributes that make it beautiful, they aren't sufficient to save, either, for brothers just to see it.

They are good conversation starters, but the conversation still has to happen. You have to hear God's word. As Paul writes in Romans 10, he says, How are they to believe in him whom they have never heard, and how are they to hear without someone preaching?

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of God. The Christian rhythm always starts with hearing God's word. And my friends, this rhythm is certainly a weekly rhythm.

[14:27] It is a Sunday rhythm. We begin our week with God's word, but it is also a daily rhythm. And Sunday worship is vitally important.

But what about Monday through Saturday? You see, in Luke 5, it was business as usual. The Sea of Galilee is booming. There's commerce going on.

In other words, it most likely was not the Sabbath. It was an ordinary day. So here's Jesus, and he met these folks where they were, at their places of work.

He came to them, and he preached God's word. So what does that mean for you and me? It means that we are to be a people who press into Jesus on a Monday.

When we have a week full of responsibilities hanging over our head, we feel like we're drowning.

We are to press into Jesus on a Wednesday when we feel beat down.

[15:23] We're to press into Jesus on a Friday instead of going home and kicking our shoes off, sitting on the couch and vegging out until Sunday morning.

We're to be a people who press into Jesus Sunday through Saturday because this one count is our Christian rhythm. We are to hear God's word. Now I want you to imagine for a second being a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee.

This was the center of the economy, this sea. And so the sea was always packed with fishermen, rain or shine.

Archaeologists have discovered that there were about 16 ports on the Sea of Galilee. And they estimate that there was anywhere from 150 to 200 fishing boats on the sea every evening.

In other words, in Luke 5, Peter wasn't fishing by himself and he wasn't fishing to have some fun. This was his livelihood.

[16:24] He had a family to feed. He had employees to pay. This was a big deal. He didn't catch any fish the night before. And so you can hear Peter's frustration when Jesus, this guy that he doesn't really even know, comes up to him and says, hey, go fishing again.

But go fish at the worst time of day. He says, master, but we toiled all night and we caught nothing. In other words, he's saying, come on, Jesus.

We're tired. We're exhausted. We've been going at this all night and we haven't caught anything. And we're experienced fishermen. And you're a carpenter.

What do you know about fishing? Have you ever realized or noticed how strange this little exchange is? It's really bizarre. Jesus is a carpenter and he's from landlocked Nazareth.

Okay? No seas in sight. Fishing is not a part of that economy. And he is now here at the Sea of Galilee and he's telling these seasoned, experienced fishermen how to do their jobs.

[17:31] And it's not like Peter knew Jesus up to this point. Like up to Luke 5, Peter and Jesus have had very, very little interaction with one another.

So just imagine for a second if someone came into your work, came into your office, someone you don't even really know, and they told you how to do your job. When I was in the Air Force, I was an air traffic controller and I would often give tours of my air traffic control tower to various groups to like build community relations.

Usually it was like Boy Scouts. Now if I were giving a plane a control instruction and one of these visitors were to say, you know what?

I really think you should turn that plane left instead of right. I probably would have laughed and then told that visitor to sit down and keep quiet.

But that's not how Peter responds. Clearly Peter already knows that Jesus is different, that he's more than a carpenter. And there are many reasons for this, but perhaps it's because Peter's current teacher, John the Baptist, has told him that he said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

[18:49] Or maybe it was because his brother Andrew was already convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. Or perhaps it was because he saw Jesus miraculously heal his mother-in-law.

I'm sure all of these factors played a part, but ultimately it came down to one thing. Peter heard Jesus' voice. The incarnate word of God spoke.

And Peter listened and obeyed. And he says, at your word, I will let down the nets.

You see, it is one thing to hear and obey God's word when it addresses the areas of your life that you're not very good at, that you know you need to improve.

But it is quite another thing to hear and obey God's word in the areas that you think you know best. the areas that you excel.

[19:50] Like how you do your job, how you treat your employees, how you raise your kids, how you have fun. When Jesus speaks into these areas of our life, we are prone to tell him to sit down and keep quiet.

But my friends, Jesus is the creator of all things. And so he speaks authoritatively into every single area of our life without exception.

So I urge you this new year to press into Jesus in 2019 like these Israelites in Luke 5. Press into his word every day and let this become your one count of your Christian rhythm in 2019.

The two count, repent and believe. After hearing the voice of Jesus, Peter and Andrew, they let down their nets.

And what happens? They catch a miraculous number of fish, a crazy number of fish. So many fish that their boats are full. So they call, the boat fills, so they call their buddies John and James over.

[20 : 57] And John and James start filling up their boat. And the next thing you know, their boats are so full that they're beginning to sink. That's a lot of fish. If this were me, I think I'd be celebrating after a night of catching nothing.

I'd be hooting and hollering. I'd be giving high fives. I'd be doing that floss thing that those kids are doing nowadays. I'd be like making plans to go buy that new boat I've been eyeballing. I'd probably even offer Jesus a job. But that's not how Peter responds. Peter's mind wasn't on the fish or the new boat.

Peter doesn't give Jesus high fives. He doesn't offer Jesus a job. Instead, Peter falls on his face at the feet of Jesus and he cries out, depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

That's a shocking response to something so great as catching all of these fish. Is this how you would respond?

[22 : 10] You see, Peter realized that the infinitely powerful and holy Son of God was standing in his boat. He was standing in his boat. And he realized that Jesus was responsible for catching every single one of those fish.

and he also realized that he deserved to be punished. That he deserved to die for his sins and this makes sense in the Old Testament they were expecting a military Messiah who was going to come and judge.

But on this day Peter doesn't find judgment. He finds the friend of sinners. He finds the man who dines with tax collectors. He finds the man who touches unclean leopards.

Who hugs the hopeless. Who communes with cripples. Who heals the deaf and the blind. Who pursues the outcasts. And who even loves ordinary middle class fishermen like Peter.

As Peter discovered on that boat Jesus is the friend of sinners. But as he would find out over the course of his time with Jesus he also found that Jesus does not absolve our need for repentance.

[23 : 27] Remember Jesus is the man who began his public ministry with the words repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The friend of sinners does not absolve our need for repentance.

In fact increased faith actually produces increased repentance. Your repentance is a reflection of your faith and vice versa.

The two go hand in hand. Faith and repentance they cannot be separated. Faith produces genuine repentance and repentance produces deeper faith.

So this semester I'll be preaching through the book of John the gospel of John with my students. So excited. I love the book of John. It's one of my favorites and one of the reasons why I love this gospel is that the theme verb is this word believe.

It's John's favorite verb in the entire gospel. He uses this verb 98 times. It's the third most used word in the gospel behind Jesus and God.

[24 : 36] If you compare this to the other gospels Matthew uses the word 14 times Mark uses it 11 times and Luke uses the word believe 9 times.

John uses this word four times as much as the other three gospels combined. Why does he focus so much on this word?

According to John believing in Jesus is the most important thing a person can do. It is the height of humanity is belief in Christ.

Just look at John's purpose statement in John chapter 20. John wrote that if you were to take all the libraries in the entire world and put them together they couldn't contain all of the signs and miracles that Jesus performed on earth.

There aren't enough books. After he says this he says he writes but these things 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.

[25 : 44] Belief in Jesus changes everything. It changes everything as we head into the new year. It changes our resolutions. It changes our rhythm. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will press this truth into us this year.

Because here's the thing. I know that 2019 there will be days when believing is hard. There will be days when we are ridiculed for our faith.

There will be days when it would be easier to stay silent. There will be days when the valley seems so deep and the mountain seems unreachable.

There will be days when your only prayer is I believe help my unbelief. There will be days in 2019 where we struggle to believe and this is why the two count of the Christian rhythm is so important.

Repent and believe. This is our rhythm. It's not a one and done thing. You see if repentance and belief are not your two count, if they're not a part of your rhythm, you'll start to fish like Norman and Paul.

[27 : 04] Norman and Paul thought they were really great fishermen, all the while failing to catch any fish. Even when things were great, even when his boat was sinking with fish, Peter repented and he turned to Jesus in faith.

This is our rhythm in 2019. The three count, embrace your commission. So here is Peter, his face is on the floor at the feet of Jesus and Peter is given a new mission.

He's given a new purpose in life. Jesus says to Peter, he says, from now on you will be catching men. You see, Peter was commissioned by Jesus to go fishing.

So one of the unique aspects of working at the Air Force Academy is that when my students graduate, they all receive a presidential commission. They become commissioned officers.

They become second lieutenants. Now this word, commission, it comes from two Latin words and it literally means to send with. To send with. So when my cadets graduate, they are literally being sent with the authority of another.

[28 : 25] They are being sent with another's authority. They are being entrusted with another's authority. You see, in and of themselves, there isn't a single officer in the United States military that has any power in and of themselves.

It is a derived authority. Due to their commission, they are able to command others. because of the president's authority entrusted to them.

And the same is true for you and I as Christians, but at an infinitely higher scale. We're not talking about a presidential commission. We're talking about a commission from the God of the universe.

That is a humbling reality. That's a humbling commission to receive. Just like Peter, every Christian throughout human history has been commissioned by Christ to go fishing.

Jesus says, from now on you, all of you, from now on you, we'll be catching men.

[29 : 30] my friends, you have been commissioned by Christ to go fishing. And as a result, you are sent with his authority.

You're entrusted with his authority to make disciples of all nations, to go fishing for men. Practically speaking, what does this mean?

What does this look like as we head into the new year? Well, in my humble opinion, far too many Christians overcomplicate evangelism. We make it way harder than it actually is.

Many think that they have to take an apologetics course, or they have to have a seminary degree, or they have to be a Christian for a certain period of time, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

All those things are important, don't get me wrong. But what I've found is that many Christians use these things and other things as like a wall to hide behind.

[30 : 30] We'll find any excuse not to pursue evangelism. And I get it. I have fallen into that snare a lot.

Evangelism really isn't that complicated. You can read all the evangelism books in the world. But it really is not that complicated. Here's the thing, when you love something, when you really love something, evangelism is just the natural overflow.

It just pours out. And this goes for more than just the Christian faith, for Christian evangelism, this goes for everything. Everyone is an evangelist for something. Everyone, with no exceptions.

Be it their favorite sports team, be it their political party, be it their essential oils, they're like, goodness. Oh, CrossFit, holy smokes, you want to see some good evangelism?

Meet a CrossFitter. Those guys know evangelism because they love it. Evangelism comes really easy.

[31 : 42] When the message you love, you want others to have an experience as well. Last year, the movie Black Panther, it became the second highest grossing four-day opening in movie history.

It raked in \$242 million in only four days. And I did some research, I was just wondering, why did this movie, I mean, it was great, I loved it, but why did this movie do so well?

And in a word, evangelism. people in droves were coming out of the movie theater and they couldn't help but tell their friends and family about how great this movie was and that they had to go see it.

They felt compelled to proclaim the good news of this movie, Black Panther, with the hope that others would go see it and experience the same joy.

As Christians, we have the greatest news to share with the world. It doesn't get any better than the gospel.

[32 : 50] This news is so much better than any movie, than any essential oil or CrossFit gym or political party or sports team, all the things that we are naturally evangelists for.

The gospel is so much better here. Jesus defeated sin, death, and the devil for you. Because of Jesus, God has adopted you into his family and he calls you his child.

Through faith in Christ, God loves you and he's for you. And nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Nothing.

My friends, there is nothing that will give your friends and family more joy than the gospel. So don't overcomplicate it.

Just give him Jesus. You'll fail. Let the Holy Spirit do his thing. Listen, Christians who wait for the perfect moment to evangelize, to share their faith, they will likely never share their faith.

[34 : 05] There's no perfect moments. Christians who wait for the most effective strategy to share their faith, they'll likely never share their faith. There's no perfect strategy. And Christians who are waiting to reach some elusive degree of sanctification, like they have to hit some holiness mark, they'll likely never share their faith because you'll never be fully sanctified in this life.

My friends, the best evangelists are those who love the gospel. people. In 2019, don't overcomplicate evangelism. Through faith in Christ, you have already been commissioned by God to go fishing.

You've already been entrusted with his authority. We are to joyfully and eagerly embrace this commission in 2019 because this is our three count. This is our rhythm. All right, our four count, leave everything and follow Jesus.

In the book, a river runs through it. The four count is described as the hardest count in the entire rhythm. And it's the rhythm that, it's the count that throws off the entire rhythm, if you don't do it correctly.

In the book, to perform the four count, you had to muster like all of your strength and you had to propel your rod forward with everything you got. You had to give it your all.

[35 : 27] And I think the four count of the Christian rhythm is also the hardest count. It's the count that throws us off. It throws off the entire rhythm.

You see, we may have heard God's word, we repent and believe, we embrace our commission, but when it comes time to go fishing, we just give it a little wrist flick.

We don't put our all into it. Our passage this morning, this last sentence, it ends in such a radical way.

Such a radical way, it should shock us out of complacency, out of the temptation to be complacent. It should shock us. It says, and when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Jesus.

You see, the four count, it demands your all. It doesn't just demand some of your all.

[36 : 29] The text doesn't say, and they left almost everything and followed Jesus. And that's why this is such a difficult count.

Paul writes in Philippians 3, verse 8, he says, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

Brothers and sisters, the Christian life is not easy. Leaving everything and following Jesus is not easy. And here's why. Christianity is unlike any other religion.

religion. Every other religion says give some or give much. Maybe even they'll go as far as saying give most. Christianity says give all.

Give all. Christianity says leave everything and follow Jesus. And I know this is a daunting reality.

[37 : 39] This is an intimidating charge to leave everything to follow Jesus. To leave, for me in particular, to leave all of the counterfeit gods that I think love me.

To leave all of the idols of my heart that I think I love. To leave my self-centric pursuit of comfort and security, which I often use at the expense of others.

to leave my pursuit of glory to proclaim God's glory. There's nothing easy about this.

Yet there's nothing more life-giving. For in the midst of our doubt and our fear, Jesus gives us the same comforting words that he gave to Peter in Luke 5.

He says to each one of us, he says, don't be afraid. He says, don't be afraid. I'm with you and I'm for you in 2019.

[38 : 46] Don't be afraid. I will never leave you or forsake you. Don't be afraid. I know you'll fail. I know you won't leave everything.

And that's why I left everything for you. I gave all to redeem you from the power of sin and death. I gave all to free you from the bondage of sin.

I gave all to free you from your guilt and shame. I gave all to reconcile you to your heavenly father. I did it.

I gave everything. I gave all so that you could go fishing. I gave all to you. He said, don't be afraid. To follow Jesus means to fish for Jesus.

And therefore, God's rhythm must become our rhythm in 2019. This is a rhythm of hearing God's word, repenting and believing the gospel, embracing our commission to fish for souls, and a rhythm of leaving everything to follow Jesus.

[39 : 58] This is our rhythm. So welcome to 2019. Let's make it a year that we fish. Amen. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word this morning.

Thank you for Luke 5. Thank you for our commission. We don't take it lightly. We know that you have entrusted to us a great deal, and we pray, Lord, that we will boldly tell others of our faith, of the good news of Jesus Christ, that the joy of the gospel will overflow, that we will be unable to contain our joy for the gospel.

We pray, Lord, that you will use these words for your infinite purposes. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.