

# In the Boat With No Fish

by Thaddeus Barnum

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of moving from a stagnant faith to an active relationship with Jesus, recognizing His presence and obeying His call in our lives.*

**Duration:** 25:24

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:19, John 21:3, John 21:19, Acts 5:17-19, Acts 5:29

**Topics:** "Christian Life"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the manifestation of Jesus to his disciples and the significance of this encounter. The speaker mentions that Jesus first met Peter, John, and James in a boat in Galilee after they had a failed fishing trip. The speaker also highlights the importance of obedience to God, as demonstrated by the disciples' response to the council that had sentenced Jesus to death. The sermon concludes with the message that believers should follow Jesus and obey Him.

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## Transcript

How did you do that? So we can hear you. Thousands can. And it was acted on.

Imagine if this if this Easter message came into us and we came into the Easter message. What would life be like? How would things be different? How would it play different? I think about that because a lot of times what happens, the pastor came up to me this week, he has a church of about three or four hundred people, he's brand new in the area, and he came up to me and he said I am stunned. He said he's come out of the south in the Bible Belt and he arrived in New England and they had this wonderful service of worship of the word and he watched three or four hundred glassy eyed faces looking back, unmoved, untouched just staring some looking at their watch wondering if the service would ever be over and when it was done people got up and as they were meeting people at the end there was no movement there was no people inspired moved by something the Lord had done together.

Nothing. He walked away wondering what happened? What was going on? I met another pastor recently who came up to me and he just said I am all I can say is in my service I am off track. I've lost the joy I've lost the peace I'm not in the place of God's will for my life right now and I don't know what to do.

I give those stories because I think for a lot of us what ends up happening is the bridge between what we've heard and how we live where we are is not connected. And that's what discipleship that's what growing in Christ is about it's about hearing not believing but not just believing but watching the Holy Spirit

act it in our lives so our character reflects the change he wants to do in us and that change inevitably leads to giving what we've received. Jesus said freely you've received freely give and I've always said if you don't give it you don't have it because if you have it you're going to give it.

The reason that is is that he's uncontainable so a lot of what happens here for me in this passage is found in the very first verse Jesus manifested himself to the disciples. Now a lot has been said about these first three verses about Simon Peter saying I'm going fishing because preachers have got to dream up stories. The Bible doesn't tell us why they went fishing they just went fishing but I can tell you in great writing and in great orchestras great music the way stories begin the way the music begins is the way it's called the recapitulation if you know that in music is the way the story ends the music ends the themes where did Jesus first meet Peter and John and James in a boat in Galilee after they'd come out of night fishing and there were no fish.

Same imagery here John didn't tell us that story Luke told us that story in Luke 5 that's how the story began with those disciples but the same story is playing here these seven men are in the boat and they're night fishing and there's no fish they are men who have beheld the risen Lord and they're in the boat and they've got the story they've got the story they're in the boat and they've got the story we're going to just say it as they're believing Christians absolutely and they've got I mean I can't imagine what it would've been like to be in that boat that night to hear the stories played over do you remember when I mean having those seven having just experienced everything from John's baptism through the ministry of three and a half years all that went through in the teaching of our

Lord and then the last week and all that took place and all that had happened and now in this period of 40 days before his ascension they're out fishing I mean I can imagine they are alive with story but there they are in the boat I like this imagery only because suddenly in the appearance of our Lord Jesus he doesn't appear to them in the boat nor does he appear to them walking on water in the gospels we've got both scenes we've got him in the boat with them we've got him walking on water when he appears he's on the beach he's on the beach actually with breakfast which is so cool I mean the smell of fish the bread I mean the provision is actually already on the beach and the imagery is much like we read last night in Emmaus when this man appears on the beach and they don't recognize him

they don't know who it is this stranger's on the beach and he calls out to the boys and says how you doing have you caught anything what's going on and they say no they haven't caught anything and then he gives them the order cast your net on the other side of the boat I don't know if you respond to strangers or not they did they did what the man said to do and it's that moment that we actually see a movement from the past to the present in the boat they're remembering the past I would suggest to you a lot of the churches in our world and a lot of Christians live in the boat they're believing Christians absolutely and when they gather together they're remembering what they've what they've gone through what they believe they remember what Jesus did they come but there's no yet intersection

into the present they recite the creed we know what we believe but right this moment we're looking back into the stories of the past but there's no present story there in the boat until this man appears and says cast the net and they do and in the miracle of the net being suddenly full the imagery comes back that's the story at the beginning they went out in the boat again because the preacher said let's go fishing which is so dull don't listen to preachers and they go out and suddenly the net was full in the beginning and now here the net is full and it's John that turns back to the beach and the eyes now see this is not a stranger as you see in the text here he says in verse 7 it is the Lord suddenly what we've got in this imagery is the

boat without him but him present in their hearts

and them remembering the past to he manifested himself to them today now in the present that journey from past to present they behold him they see him it is the Lord two miracles are happening here one answer to prayer there's fish no fish fish I mean not just fish fish beyond what the net can actually hold but the biggest miracle of it is they behold him which by the way is the entire point behind miracles anytime the Lord answers prayer it isn't the answer to prayer that's the biggest miracle it's that the Lord manifests himself to us in the answering of prayer and you can see it in Peter's focus Peter's focus is not the fish Peter's focus is the man on the beach he immediately throws himself he's got to go be with the Lord so the prayer need is actually not the essential issue here

make sense essential issue is the Lord is here the Lord is here and so Peter dives into the water to go be with him the other six now have the job thank you Peter to bring the fish in this leap from past to present is what makes the church go from glassy eyed to alive he's in our midst and he's working in our midst he's active in our midst the stories I remember one church my wife and I went to years ago that used to be alive in the Lord and that period of being alive ended and when I asked them what was the best year of this church's life they went back eight years ten years oh the Lord was moving then when testimonies were a dime a dozen and now there were no stories there was no movement that nobody had anything to say today there was no movement today there was no obedience meaning

cast the net step out and they did and in doing they saw and they bring the movement from the boat to the beach is the movement that he has stepped into our story he's working in the present he is with us and we are with him Easter in us and us in Easter resurrected power alive today that's why I don't ever want to drum up excitement in a church and make people feel good which churches can do and I think Mary Kay Cosmetic Conferences can do also and I think football game I think the Patriots can do that I think Tom Brady Tom Brady can do this there are a lot of great inspirational speakers out there that can rev up emotion this is not that this is the knowledge that he has manifested himself in his glory in our midst what no man could do he does and they know it and they bring all that

they come with all their fish on 153 we know the number of fish and this time the nets don't break they did in the first story of Luke 5 but now the nets don't break and there they are in the presence of the Lord with provision and with grace and with kindness I wish this story if I was doing the movie of this particular and I was writing the narrative this is where the scene would fade out the boys in the boat the boys on the beach and I would characterize that that really is the Christian life there are times that we feel bereft of him though we know him and love him and we don't feel him present with us and there are times when boom he's alive and we're in the intimacy of his fellowship and we kind of move as a church from boat to beach and beach to boat but there on the beach wouldn't

it be great just to close the scene and say that's the Christian church that's the Christian life to be in the presence of the Lord fish and bread and fellowship and worship isn't that enough scene closes I'd love that problem is he messes it up messes it up because the scene doesn't close he messes it up because he says now I've got work for you to do the boys never go back to the boat there's no imagery past John 21 that ever puts the boys back in the boat actually we never see them back on the beach he's actually commissioning them to go and the way he's done it is by showing the single most important thing that what he has done is alive in the present when we've got churches and we've got Christian lives that live in the past and not in the present we fall into apathy we just do it's

the way it works a lot of things can bring apathy on um conflict chronic illness times that you just feel bereft especially if you've known times when you're just sick of the way people talk and you leave church and you isolate that's one thing we do on our staff anybody that isolates we go to and make sure that they're annoyed by the fact that we are praying with them praying for them even if they stay away that we're around them because there's nothing the devil I think likes better than to isolate the sheep isolate the people but what happens in our isolation is we begin to lose the present he manifests himself in the present and when he does that and shows us when two or three are gathered together there I am in the midst there I am, I am there in the midst and that's the difference I

don't want to play church, do church, I want him in the midst and so he sends them out do you love me?

If you love me, go he puts it not on obedience is never done because it's a moral I've got to do this it's an ethic it's a law rather it comes out of do you love me? If you love me take what I've given and give take what I've given and give and he sends them that's literally what happens and he does it extremely personally Peter, this is your story and then Peter says yeah but what about John? what about John? and he says John's actually not in your business John's my business John's not your business the thing I love about that is that it gives a uniqueness Spirit of Christ is not the same as other churches or other you've got a calling on you that's unique we work together with churches absolutely we do everything we can to work with other churches that have saving faith absolutely but you're unique if you've got more than one child you know that already part of the same family but they are unique I bet the twins are unique which is crazy different personalities and the job of the parent is to bless the personality uniquely theirs so they can be all that God wants that one to be though they're one family so it is in the kingdom of God same principle same thing so you literally move this is by the way what every a lot of churches all over the world are going to hear this story move from boat to beach and beach move into service because at the end of the story in verse 19 he says the words that are singly the most important words for a church to hear he does not say in verse 19 now this he said signifying by what kind of death Peter would glorify God and when he had spoken this he said to Peter believe me believe in me what's he say follow me Christian life is about movement it's not it's not about being in a boat sitting it's about movement everything about the kingdom of God is movement ever since the beginning he said follow me be at the edge follow me so if you go if you wouldn't mind Acts 5 what I want you to see is the nature of how this plays out because this is the other piece of scripture that's being used tomorrow for some who are following lectionary but they literally move from boat to beach in verse 17 of Acts 5 this is just lovely and some of you may not sign up for being in church ever again when you hear this piece they move from boat to beach verse 18 to jail they're in jail they're in jail for witnessing about the Lord I don't know if that blesses you or not but I tell you if you live and follow Jesus you will find opposition it's just a fact does that make sense?

I mean some of you know it in your families some of you know it in your friends I mean I had a friend that just said you know I played an older couple said I play bridge with such and such and they looked at us and said please don't tell us you're born again Christians and they said yeah actually we are and that was the end of the bridge game yeah that's just that that's the story the other day I was in the shop I was in the grocery store and this woman was on her cell phone welcome to new smartphone life and all of a sudden she used the Lord's name in vain boom right there I was in jeans and a t-shirt trying to get food for family and I turned and looked straight in the eyes and I said please don't do that you just used the name of my Lord please don't do that she so it wasn't real

pleasant in the grocery store but but but she was not chastened but see the thing is is that she knew she was and I did it just like that please don't do that please don't do that you just used the name of my Lord

out loud like that and so she cussed me back which was lovely I mean again but and I wasn't in prison after that but but she was she was but I don't think she'll forget that moment because it wasn't a rebuke of unkindness I didn't it was literally a beg a plea please don't do that I mean it wasn't something that but that's part of the life that we live in I mean it's part of the culture that we live in and it's part of bridging into the culture if you bridge into the culture you'll find opposition absolutely and the thing that's amazing though is in 18 you've got the jail and in

19 you've got the angel of the Lord in the midst of the story please know that that doesn't always happen by Acts 10 if you read the story Peter and James are in prison Peter gets out and James doesn't does that mean that the Lord loved James less and Peter more no it's just the will of God for Peter's life the will of God for James' life some people stay in the prisons and die with the grace of the Lord and some people are released from the prisons and in this story the angel of the Lord appears in the story and suddenly in verse 19 you move from 20 saying go speak the whole message of this life and in verse 27 suddenly these same men are standing in front of the council the same council that sentenced Jesus to die same, they move from the boat to the beach, the beach to prison and

prison in front of the same council that sentenced their Lord unto death and their response in verse 29 is we must obey God rather than men it isn't just we believe it's we must obey that key is the key of movement our movement is to follow Jesus and the key of that is that we're going to obey him, we're going to obey one more line and I'm done, promise verse 32 as he tells the message of the life in verse 30 and 31 the God of our fathers raised up Jesus who you put to death by hanging him on a cross he is the one God exalted to his right hand, Prince Savior, granting repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins we are witnesses of these things, watch how this goes, watch carefully, we are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who believe him

believe him the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey him, the word obedience is really systemic here it isn't enough for a church to sit by and believe and believe and believe and believe and then tell stories about believing stories about the past the joy of the church gathered together is the joy that he's moving in our midst today I wish somebody here had just taken a recording of the prayers that we just prayed for the people around the room and I wish we could take those same prayers and just list them out and two weeks from today, read those prayers back and a month same prayers, because Lord knows you'll have a ton in the middle and then a month later and watch, this is what Errol and I call journaling, it's psalm writing, it's not it's literally taking the prayers that you all

prayed today and looking two weeks from now and saying because usually two weeks from now we're on to our next prayers yeah? yeah Lord, look what you did, look what you're doing, this one actually there's no resolution, this one there's been grace in that story since we prayed that before, the Lord's moving in that story, we need to continue to pray through this one but this one's different, this one's he's here, he's working do you know what that does?

It builds faith inside of us strength inside of us do you know what that does to anybody who hears coming alongside? The Lord's in this people, he's moving in this people, he's doing something among us as a people and that's why I think that the joy of looking at the Spirit of Christ is, Lord, where are we in obedience? Where are we not in obedience? Where are we just off track? Where are we not on track? Help us to be a people that follow, help us to be a people that obey movement, get us out of the boat, get us to the beach, but don't let us stay at the beach we'll have a lot of beach time we've got a lot of beach time coming, yeah? there's beach time planned ahead, but right now he's got us to go forward, what does

that look like for Peter for John, for Spirit of Christ, specifically for us as a people and then to move us, the Holy Spirit given to those who obey him to follow him even if it's risky, even if it costs something to do what does obedience to Jesus Christ at Spirit of Christ look like?

Lord, get us out of the boat out of the past, get us into the present, where are we in the present? Where are you sending us? Where are you moving us? And that's how the church literally comes alive I've got lots of stories in my life about times where I've just felt off track, and what you do when you feel off track to get back on track is to know we're actually in the center of the Lord's will, we're moving in the direction he's calling us. I'm going to stop there and just say there's a lot of stories still to tell because at our church, that's our lead question, that's our lead story, where are you taking us?

There are prayers we have prayed, we have not got answers, and yet there are prayers that we've got answers to, and we're moving on what we know to be true, and holding back on what we don't, but Lord Jesus make us a people of movement Does that make sense?

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