

Puzzling Parables

Dragging In the Fish

Part 11 – December 4, 2016

Welcome to where we're learning how to be fishers of men ... *and women*.



Jesus is in His home office in Capernaum, offering some bonus parables to His disciples.

On that shoreline, about a year earlier ...



As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and **I will make you fishers of men.**" – Matthew 4:18-19 NIV



I *hated* fishing when I was little. And, my dad was a fishing guide on the Skagit. I *loved* taking the boat to the river, launching it in the water, and riding in it over the waves. I just hated *fishing*. I *loved* eating the burgers dad barbecued, the sandbars we played on, and reeling in fish. I just hated *fishing*.

Somewhere on this same shoreline, after His death and resurrection, Jesus sends His fishers-of-men into the world, saying ...

... lo, [*idou: behold!; see!*] I am with you [*the Twelve*] always, even to the **end** [*synteleia (soon-TAIL-ee-ah): completion; consummation; legal finalization*] of the **age.**" [*aiōn (eye-OWN): age; world*] Amen. – Matthew 28:20b NKJ



***Synteleia* only appears six times in scripture, and always as "synteleia of aion" or "completion of the age".** (Mt 13:39, 40, 49, 24:3, 28:20; Heb 9:26)

And, **only once is it precisely defined ... see if it's what you think.**

... now, once at the **end** [*synteleia*] of the **ages**, [*aiōn*] [Jesus] has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered **once** [at the "synteleia/completion of the aion/Old Covenant age] to bear the sins of many. – Hebrews 9:26b-28a NKJ

When He said, "It is finished," *it was.* (Jn 19:30) And now, in *this "present age"*, (1 Tim 6:17) Paul says we are made alive and seated with Christ ...

... in order that in the **coming ages** [*aiōn*] [God] might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is **by grace** you have been saved, **through faith** ... it is the **gift of God** ... – Ephesians 2:4-9 NIV

But, these last days we live in are coming to a close.

The Old Covenant Age [*aiōn*] of Law had a completion [*synteleia*].

The New Covenant Age [*aiōn*] of Grace will have a conclusion [*telos*].

[Paul writes of the prior age] Now all **these things** happened to **them** [*“our forefathers”* (10:1)] as examples, and they were written [*in the Old Testament*] for **our** admonition, upon whom the **ends** [*telos: conclusion; termination*] of the **ages** [*aiōn*] have come. – 1 Corinthians 10:11 NKJ

Know what our present age is called? Paul says, **“Now is the Day of Salvation.”** (2 Cor 6:2) Want to know when it’ll end? *I’ll tell you.* Know why it’s singular, instead of the “days” of salvation? Christ is the light, and in His presence there is no night. Which means, however long He gathers the lost, it all takes place in the day. So, when will this present age come to a close?

Today. We’ve got a big task with no time to waste. And, **our work involves Jesus, you and me, and the angels**, who, according to His next private parable, are fishers-of-men as well!

[Only Matthew records this parable] Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a **net** that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen **pulled** it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the **end** [*synteleia*] of the **age**. [*aiōn*] The **angels** will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. – Matthew 13:47-50 NIV



This fishing trip has begun, and at some point will end. And, **there’s a good reason the angels are fellow fishers-of-men.** In Revelation (19:10) when John bows to the angel, what’s the angel say? **“Don’t! I’m a fellow servant with you and with those who hold to the testimony of Jesus.”** “Angel” [*aggelos (AWN-geh-loss)*] means messenger. Funny. **This *aggelos* is called a fellow worker;** and in Matthew, (9:52-53) **John is called an *aggelos*.**

In *The Wheat and the Weeds*, **the angels are harvesters** who come at the *synteleia* of the *aion*. (Mt 13:40)

Yet, **Jesus calls His followers to the fields white unto harvest, and says to pray for more harvesters.** (Mt 9:37-38)

Do you think He’s lacking angels or earth-bound messengers?

As the angel said to John: **“Stand up. You’re a fellow worker.”**

You, me, and our fellow angels are on a mission from God. *A fishing trip to end all fishing trips!*

[A week after His resurrection] Jesus said, [*to His Twelve*] “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” – John 20:21 NIV

This is not a suggestion it's an instruction. Sharing our faith is *so critical* to our created purpose and hope and peace and joy.

[Paul said] I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and **complete the task** the Lord Jesus has given me — **[and, that task is ...?]** the **task of testifying** to the **gospel of God's grace**. **[And, this Gospel of God's grace is?]** - Acts 20:24 NIV

As we read, regarding the coming *aion*: the "**incomparable riches of his grace**", "**expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus**", are salvation "**by grace**", "**through faith**", as a "**gift of God**".



Simple truth. But still, an intimidating and overwhelming task; because, **we tend to panic over our own ignorance**; because, **we tend to exaggerate the task at hand**.

[Jesus said] You will be my **witnesses** [**martyrs** (a judicial term)] ... - Acts 1:8b NIV



We hear *fish net* and think, "Hmm, it's like fishing with a net." But, for some reason, we hear *witness* and *don't think*, "Hmm, it's like testifying in court". **Don't Panic. You're a witness. You don't argue the case, push for a verdict, or bring a conviction. His Spirit does that.** (John 16:8) **You just be ready to respond, in your own words. When you're called on and questioned.**

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who **asks** you to give **the reason** for **the hope that you have**. **[If you show no visible signs of hope, they won't ask. And, if all they see is religion, they'll run. But, everyone is attracted to genuine faith and hope and love]** But do this with gentleness and respect ... - 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

Otherwise, you'll cancel out what they thought they saw in you. A witness doesn't barge in, or push forth their own agenda. **They wait patiently, watch attentively, and speak softly** (when given opportunity). Know what that sounds like: *fishing!* Which is why I *hated fishing!*

Wait patiently. Watch attentively. Speak softly. Not how I roll. **"Don't make so much noise; you'll scare the fish!"** Well, that's actually good advice for us. **The more practiced I've become at waiting and watching, the more sensitive and discerning I've become to the "nibbles".**



You can't push a net; you cast it and draw it in. And, we draw 'em in with joyful, fruitful, peaceful, transforming, faith. **If your faith isn't attractive, don't push it on people.** But, the more we become like Jesus, the more attractive our faith.

And, **everyone wrestles with guilt, shame, emptiness, and death.** Those are the biggies we all share.

So, if it appears that you have inside information, manifesting itself in authentic peace and meaning and hope, they'll bite. **"Jesus cleansed my conscience, replaced chaos with purpose, and gave me hope beyond the grave.** So, I guess I found the three things everyone is searching for."

But, what if they ask a question I don't have an answer for? Not possible. Because, "I don't know" is a great answer. **Witnesses often say, "I don't know," but, you know what they *don't* say, "I'm too shy, or too timid, to answer the question." That's contempt.**



Believers make the mistake of praying for boldness and courage. You don't need it. You got plenty.

You don't lack courage, you lack love. Love naturally drives out all fear. (1 John 4:18)



Could you be too shy to stop a child from toddling into a fire pit? **Don't pray for courage. Pray for compassion.**

We're called to the *ultimate* catch and release program: **catch 'em before they're lost to the fire; release 'em from their guilt and shame and hopelessness.**

After His resurrection, when Jesus appeared on the shore to His Twelve, to send 'em into the world, do you think they realized they'd been paralleling the parable that depicted this moment?

Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake ...

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat ...

... and caught all kinds of fish.

When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

When it was **full**, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore.

Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore.

Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

[After sorting the good from the bad, they discovered that] It was **full** of large fish, 153 ...

This is how it will be at the end of the age.

The angels will come and separate the wicked ... and throw them into the fiery furnace ...

When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it

Matthew 13:47-50 & John 21:6-11 NIV

The harvest is here. The fish are jumpin'.

This is the Day of Salvation.

Will you offer the hope that you have?

All He asks is that we wait, watch, and testify to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us, Dad.