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Body

1.

Call Sinners to Repentance vv. 12-17

1.

Text

1.

12 Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee. 13 And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, 14 so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: 15 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles- 16 the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." 17 From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

2.

Go to the sinners

1.

First Christ went to where the sinners were. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us " in His incarnation. "
Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.
" While eating with tax collectors and sinners, Christ said "
I have come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.
" (

Luke 5:32
) So at the beginning of His ministry, Christ went to a place known to be full of sinners: "
Galilee of the Gentiles.
"

2.

Notice the places mentioned here. Galilee is a region, described as being full of Gentiles. Capernaum is a city on the shore of the sea of Galilee. Zebulun and Naphtali were tribes of Israel, and this passage refers to their territory, which overlapped with Galilee, and contained Capernaum. All of these places were in the northwest corner of Israel, between the sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean sea. This area bordered on foreign nations to the north, and in the middle of Galilee was the highway to those foreign nations.

3.

The significance of this region is that it was often more pagan than other parts of Israel. It was further north than Samaria, which was looked down on because it contained half-breeds biologically and half-Jews religiously who believed only half of the OT Bible canonically! Judah was the southern kingdom, but Israel, the northern kingdom, was less faithful to God so was taken into exile first. And this region is the northernmost part of the northern kingdom, so it was taken into exile first in **2 Kings 15:29** when the Assyrians came from the north down the highway to execute God's judgment on His people's sin. But now, as the quotation from Isaiah shows so gloriously, in God's gracious providence the region taken first in the exile is saved first from their sin! The true end of the exile has come! Don't look for a merely human rescue from your political enemies. A nation of people who cannot rule their own hearts will never rule their nation. Look for a divine and spiritual rescue from the principle, the guilt, and the power of your sin which comes only through the new heart, new record, and new life God gives through your Savior Jesus Christ. The context of the Isaiah's prophecy which Matthew quotes says "
the rod of his oppressor, you have broken
as on the day of Midian
.
" (
Is. 9:4
) Midian oppressed Israel, and Gideon's armies were afraid to fight Midian because Midian army of more than 120,000 soldiers was too strong. So God narrowed down Gideon's army of 32,000 to a mere 300 soldiers, and
beat the Midianites Himself
without even needing those 300 soldiers! Why? God said, "
Lest Israel boast over me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.'
" (
Judges 7:2
)

4.

Now in the land of darkness—in the land oppressed by foreign nations, by unbeliever's sin, by Israel's own sin—"the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light." Christ went to the sinners, and tells you to go to the sinners. Go to the sinners in the middle of the fold, go to the sheep on the edges of the fold, go to the one sheep that has strayed far away. "
If your brother sins against you,
go
and tell him his fault.
" (
Matt. 18:15
) But not only your brother--"
[God] commands all men everywhere to repent.
" (
Acts 17:30
)

5.

Call sinners to repentance

1.

And so in v. 17 that is what Christ did, and what we must continue to do as His church—call sinners to repentance
. First
go to the sinners
, then
call sinners to repentance
.

2.

Make Fishers of Men vv. 18-22

1.

Text. The second thing we should learn about making disciples is found in Jesus' words at the center of vv. 18-22 – we must make fishers of men.

1.

18 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

2.

Not very long ago I preached on the parallel passage in Luke, so I'll remain brief today. The Christian organization called the Navigators knows well what it means to make fishers of men. Their theme verse is **2 Timothy 2:2**, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
" As Christ's church we must raise up members who pass on the Christian faith to others. Everyone has a different gift; for one it is teaching, for another serving, another encouraging, but all Christians should use their gifts to fish for men—to bring the gospel of salvation to those inside and outside the church.

3.

So you see that Christ's purpose for the church is not for the church to remain static—to just be the same people every Sunday doing the same things. His purpose is not even merely to add to its number by means of conversion. But discipleship, making followers of Christ, making fishers of men, is a
dynamic
process where unbelievers are made believers through conversion, and then those new believers are trained up to be the people God uses to bring about the conversion and discipleship of the next generation of the church's members. In light of
2 Timothy 2:2
, "
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also,
" a true disciple is a discipler; you are fishers of fishermen, disciplers of disciplers. You might say, "But I know I'm just not a teacher; that's not my gift." But your humblest acts of service in the church enable the church to disciple the next generation of servants in the church.

4.

Teach, Preach, and Gather vv. 23-25

1.

Text. In the last section of our passage Jesus engages in three means of making disciples. We read in vv. 23-25,

1.

23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. 24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. 25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

2.

Calling sinners to repentance is at the center of making disciples. The shortest complete statements of the gospel message in scripture follow this pattern: "Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15; John 20:31; Acts 2:38; 16:31; Rom. 10:9) Making fishers of men is the function and aim of the church in making disciples. Now in vv. 23-25 Christ employed 3 means of making disciples, which are not the only means scripture gives us, but are central to what the church must do. The three means in this passage are teaching, preaching, and gathering. The passage says Jesus healed, but because we don't heal miraculously today I'm pointing you to the aim and result of the healing—the result was that Jesus gathered many followers to hear the gospel. We also must teach, preach, and gather lost sheep into God's fold, into the church.

3.

Christ made disciples, and we must continue His work, by calling sinners to repentance, ma king fishers of men
, and
teaching, preaching, and gathering

His people. How, practically, should we carry this out? It's easy to be discouraged when we compare our small congregation with other congregations who have programs and ministries we don't. What makes a church a good church? Youth groups, fellowship activities, singles ministries, a choir, contemporary worship, a cool pastor, men's ministry, women's ministry, a deaf ministry, a Christian school, a big missions program, pageants, car shows? Those are good things, but what makes a church good is when it does what God commands, and puts its highest priority on those things scripture teaches are the work of the church.

4.

I'll admit I've felt inadequate when I've seen other churches with an impressively biblical or otherwise exciting "philosophy of ministry" written out on their website. How could I come up with a philosophy of ministry in one month, or even after two years of work on it, and not worry whether it is as faithful to scripture as it should be? I have good news for you and me on this point—first, most churches' philosophies of ministry are biblical, but were written in too short a time by too few people and say only part of what they should say, according to scripture. Second, Caney Orthodox Presbyterian Church has a philosophy of ministry that has been developed by thousands of pastors and theologians for over 400 years, in the Book of Church Order of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Its ideas were formulated in the fourth book of Calvin's *Institutes* in 1559, made our church order by Westminster Assembly in the 1640's, and developed by Presbyterian churches ever since. Our Book of Church Order is the most biblical guide I know for how to put the Great Commission into practice. It shows how to do the whole work of the church, and that whole work is evangelistic, so that whole work is ev angelism .

5.

Our Philosophy of Ministry, and Work of Ministry. Consider our philosophy, and work, of ministry, in the outline that follows. Each part carries out the work of evangelizing the lost.

1.

Philosophy

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Goals of Ministry: Work of the Church

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Worship, mutual edification, witness = Worship, Discipleship, Evangelism

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Diaconal service that supports this work

-

Methods of Ministry

-

Means of Grace: Word, Sacraments, Prayer

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This includes "the confession of the name of Christ before men; the exercise of fellowship in encouraging one another; the reading, teaching, and preaching of the Word of God; praying; singing; fasting; administering baptism and the Lord's Supper; collecting and distributing offerings; showing mercy; exercising discipline; and blessing the people." (BCO FG II)

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Work of Ministry: How we put our philosophy into practice

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Corporate Worship & Fellowship

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Lord's Day Worship – we preach the gospel

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Lord's Day Fellowship – we encourage one another in good works

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Prayer Meetings – we draw near to God

-

Christian Education

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Sunday School – we build up unbelievers, youth, and adults in the faith

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Bible Studies: Wednesday night & Women's Missionary Society

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Special classes: "Investigative Bible Study," "Profession of Faith Class," "New Members Class."

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Pastoral Care: Home visitation, visiting the sick, biblical counseling, pre-marital counseling, pre-baptismal counseling, church discipline.

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Service and Outreach

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Local Outreach

-

Diaconal Service: financial assistance, meals, budgeting assistance, labor and manpower, supporting local relief agencies, etc.

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Worldwide Missions

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Home Missions: 48 home missionaries, 15-20 new works per year

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Foreign Missions: 20 foreign missionaries in 11 countries whom we support through prayer and sending our offerings, care packages, and sometimes even people.

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Christian Education: New Horizons, pamphlets

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Conclusion

1.

I can hear that incredibly sharp fellow thinking to himself—"But pastor, you didn't mention the altar call! Your church doesn't have an altar call!" And I say, neither does scripture. But the biblical altar call is the Lord's Supper. If you do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, here is the most vivid picture of the gospel you will ever see, and if you missed the call to faith and repentance in the preaching, don't miss it here at the Lord's table, where you are forced to make a decision, and reveal the secrets of your heart. Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation from your sin? Then profess your faith publicly, be baptized and then partake of this meal with us, and receive God's rich, free, and abundant grace confirmed for you in these signs and seals of the bread and the wine. If you remain an unbeliever, Christ calls you to repent of your sins today, and believe on Him for salvation. If you eat this bread and drink this cup and are an unbeliever or unwilling to repent of your sin, God promises to punish you severely. The death of God's only Son on the cross is not something to trifle with! You can't come to this table where Christ's sacrifice on the true altar of God's justice is so clearly portrayed and not be forced to decide for or against Jesus Christ. At this meal, Christ calls every sinner in this room to repent and believe on Him for salvation. This meal is for believers to eat, but in it Christ also graciously calls unbelievers to come, and believe, that they may eat, and live. At this meal, Christ offers you Heaven, and calls you to flee from Hell. Because this meal is the gospel in the form of food, this meal is evangelism.

2.

Note: For those reading this sermon, I next led the congregation through the Communion service laid out in the Book of Church Order. The relevant parts are quoted below for your edification so as to provide you the real end of this sermon.