



Advice to Fishermen

Talmage Tells What Is Meant By Fishing For Men and Mending the Nets.

Washington report — In this discourse Dr. Talmage describes the gospel net and how it is to be repaired after being damaged: text, Matthew iv, 21, "James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in a ship with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets."

"I go a-fishing!" cried Simon Peter to his comrades, and the most of the apostles had hands hard from fishing tackle. The fisheries of the world have always attracted attention. In the third century the queen of Egypt had for pin money \$470,000 received from the fisheries of lake Moeris. And, if the time should ever come when the immensity of the world's population could not be fed by the vegetables and meats of the land, the sea is an amount of animal life that would feed all the populations of the earth and fatten them with a food that by its phosphorous and would make a generation brainy and intellectual beyond anything that the world has ever imagined. My text takes us among the Galilean fishermen. One day Walter Scott, while hunting in an old drawer, found among some old fishing tackle the manuscript of his immortal book, *Waverley*, which he had put away there as of no worth, and who knows but that to-day we may find some unknown wealth of thought while looking at the fishing tackle in the text.

It is not a good day for fishing, and three men are in the boat repairing the broken fishing nets. If you are fishing with a hook and line, and the fish will not bite it is a good time to put the angler's apparatus into better condition. Perhaps the last fish you hauled in was so large that something snapped, or, if you were fishing with a net, there was a mighty floundering of the scales or an exposed nail on the side of the boat which broke some of the threads and let part or all of the catches of the deep escape into their natural element. And hardly anything is more provoking than to nearly land a score or a hundred trophies from the deep, and when you are in the full glee of hauling in the spotted treasures, through some imperfection of the net they splash back into the wave. That is too much of a trial of patience for most fishermen to endure, and many a man ordinarily correct of speech in such circumstances comes to an intensity of utterance unjustifiable. Therefore no good fishermen considers the time wasted that is spent in mending his net. Now, the Bible again and again represents Christian workers as fishers of men, and we are all sweeping through the sea of humanity some kind of a net. Indeed there have been enough nets out and enough fishermen busy to have landed the whole human race in the kingdom of God long before this. What is the matter? The gospel is all right, and it has been a good time for catching souls for thousands of years. Why, then, the failures? The trouble is with the nets, and most of them need to be mended. I propose to show you the manner with which most of the nets and how to mend them. In the text old Zebedee and his two boys, James and John, were doing a good thing when they sat in the boat mending their nets.

The trouble with many of our nets is that the meshes are too large. If a fish can get his gills and half his body through the network, he tears and rends and works his way out, and leaves the place through which he squirmed a tangle of broken threads. In our desire to make everything so easy we relax, we loosen, we widen. We let them after they are once in the gospel net escape into the world, and go into indulgencies and swim all around Galilee, from north side to south side, and from east side to west side, expecting that they will come back again. We ought to make it easy for them to get into the kingdom of God, and, as far as we can, make it impossible for them to get out. The poor advice nowadays to many is: "Go and do just as you did before you were captured for God and heaven. The net was not intended to be any restraint or any hindrance. What you did before you were a Christian do now. Go to all styles of amusement, read all styles of books, engage in all styles of behavior as before you were converted." And so, through these meshes of permission and laxity, they wriggle out through this opening and that opening, tearing the net as they go, and soon all the souls we expected to land in heaven, before we know it, are back into the deep sea of the world. Oh, when we go a-gospel fishing, let us make it as easy as possible for souls to get in and as hard as possible to get out.

In the Bible language an unmeaning verbage when it talks about self denial, and keeping the body under, and about walking the narrow way and entering the straight gate and about carrying the cross? Is there to be no way of telling whether a man is a Christian except by his taking the communion chalice on sacramental day? May a man be as reckless about his thoughts, about his words, about his temper, about his amusements, after conversion as before? Alas, the words of Christ are so little heeded when he said: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." The church is fast becoming as bad as the world, and when it gets as bad as the world it will be worse than the world by so much, as it will add hypocrisy of a most appalling kind to its other defects.

Furthermore, many of our nets are torn to pieces by being entangled with other nets. It is a sad sight to see fishermen fighting about sea room and

pulling in opposite directions, each to get his net, both nets damaged by the struggle and losing all the fish. Now, I have noticed a man cannot fish and fight at the same time. He either neglects his net or his musket. It is amazing how much time some of the fishermen have to look after other fishermen. It is more than I can do to look after my own net. You see the wind is just right, and it is such a good time for fishing, and the fish are coming in so rapidly that I have to keep my eye and hand busy. There are about 200,000,000 souls wanting to get into the kingdom of God, and it will require all the nets and all the fishermen of Christendom to safely land them. Oh, brethren, let us spend our time in fishing instead of fighting. But if I angrily jerk any net across your net, and you jerk your net angrily across mine, we will soon have two broken nets and no fish. The French revolution nearly destroyed the French fisheries, and ecclesiastical war is the worst thing possible while hauling souls into the kingdom. My friends, I notice in the text that James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, were busy not mending somebody else's nets, but mending their own nets, and I rather think that we also are engaged in Christian work in this opening century will require all our spare time to mend our own nets. God help us in the important duty!

In this work of repair we need to put into the nets more threads of common sense. When we can present religion as a great practicality we will catch a hundred souls where we now catch one. Present religion as an intellectual and we will fail. Out in the fisheries there are set across the waters what are called gill nets, and the fish put their heads through the meshes and then cannot withdraw them, because they are caught by the gills. But gill nets cannot be of any service in religious work. Men are never caught for the truth by their heads; it is by the heart. At all times and in all places, and in all ages, and in all lands, no argument ever saved a man, and no keen analysis ever brought a man into the kingdom of God. Heart work, not head work. Away with your gill nets! Sympathy, helpfulness, consolation, love, are the names of some of the threads that we need to weave in our gospel nets when we are mending them.

Do you know that the world's heart is bursting with trouble, and if you could make that world believe that the religion of Jesus Christ is a soothing omnipotence, the whole world would surrender to-morrow, yea, would surrender this hour? The day before James A. Garfield was inaugurated as president I was in the cars going from Richmond to Washington. A gentleman seated near to me in the cars knew me, and we were soon in familiar conversation. It was just after a bereavement, and I was speaking to him from an overburdened heart about the sorrow I was suffering. Looking at his cheerful face, I said: "I guess you have escaped all trouble. I would judge from your countenance that you have come through free from all misfortune." Then he looked at me with a look I shall never forget, and whispered in my ear: "Sir, you know nothing about trouble. My wife has been in an insane asylum for 15 years." And then he turned and looked out of the window and into the night with a silence I was too overpowered to break. That was another illustration of the fact that no one escapes trouble. Why, that man seated next to you in church has on his soul a weight compared with which a mountain is a feather. That woman seated next to you in church has a grief the recital of which would make your body, mind and soul shudder.

When you are mending your net for this wide, deep sea of humanity, take out that wire thread of criticism and that horsehair thread of harshness and put in a soft silken thread of Christian sympathy. Yea, when you are mending your nets tear out those old threads of gruffness and weave in a few threads of politeness and gentleness. In the house of God let all Christians faces beam with a look that means welcome. Say "good morning" to the stranger as he enters your pew and at the close shake hands with him and say, "How did you like the music?" Why, you would be to that man a panel of the door of heaven; you would be to him a note of the doxology that seraphs sing when a new soul enters heaven. I have in other days entered a pew in church, and the woman at the other end of the pew looked at me as much as to say, "How dare you? This is my pew, and I pay rent for it!" Well, I crouched in the other corner and made myself as small as possible and felt as though I had been stealing something. So there are people who have a sharp edge to their religion, and they act as though they thought most people had been elected to be damned and they were glad of it. Oh, let us brighten up our manner and appear in gentleness or ladyhood.

The object in fly fishing is to throw the fly far out and then let it drop gently down and keep it gently rising and falling with the waters and not plunge it like a man-of-war's anchor, and abruptness and harshness of manner must be avoided in our attempt at usefulness. I know a man in New York who is more sunny and genial when he has dyspepsia than when he is not suffering from that depressing trouble. I have found out in the morning when he starts out in the morning with such depression, he asks for special grace to keep him from snapping

up anybody that day and puts forth additional determination to be kindly and genial, and by the help of God he accomplishes it. Many of our nets need to be mended in these respects, the black threads and rough threads taken out and the bright threads and the golden threads of Christian gentleness woven in.

Again, in mending our nets we need also to put in the threads of faith and tear out all the tangled meshes of unbelief. Our work is successful according to our faith. The man who believes in only half a Bible, or the Bible in spots, the man who thinks he cannot persuade others, the man who halts, doubting about this and doubting about that, will be a failure in Christian work. Show me the man who rather thinks that the garden of Eden may have been an allegory and is not quite certain but that there may be another chance after death and does not know whether or not the Bible is inspired, and I tell you that man for soul saving is a poor stick. Faith in God and in Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost and the absolute necessity of a regenerated heart in order to see God in peace is one thread you must have in your mended net, or you will never be a successful fisher for men. Why, how can you doubt? The rottenest thread to tear out of your net is unbelief, and the most important thread that you are to put in is faith—faith in God, triumphant faith, everlasting faith.

Oh, this important work of mending our nets! If we could get our nets right, we would accomplish more in soul saving in the next year than we have in the last 20 years. But where shall we get them mended? Just where old Zebedee and his two boys mended their nets—where you are. James and John had no time to go ashore. They were not fishing for fun, as you and I do in summer time. It was their livelihood and that of their families. They mended their nets where they were—in the ship. "Oh," says someone, "I mean to get my net mended, and I will go down to the public library and I will see what the scientists say about evolution and about the 'survival of the fittest,' and I will read up what the theologians say about 'advanced thought.' I will leave the ship awhile and I will go ashore and stay there till my net is mended." Do that, my brother, and you will have no net left. Instead of them helping you mend your net, they will steal the pieces that remain. Better stay in the gospel boat, where you have all the means for mending your net. What are they? do you ask. I answer, all you need you have where you are—namely, a Bible and a place to pray. The more you study evolution and adopt what is called advanced thought, the more useless you will be. Stay in the ship and mend your net. That is where James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, staid. That is where all who get their nets mended stay.

These dear brethren of all denominations, afflicted with theological fidgets, had better go to mending their nets instead of breaking them. Before they break up the old religion and try to foist on us a new religion, let them go through some great sacrifice for God that will prove them worthy for such a work, taking the advice of Talleyrand to a man who wanted to upset the religion of Jesus Christ, and start a new one, when he said: "Go and be crucified and then raise yourself from the grave the third day!" Those who propose to mend their nets by secular and sceptical books are like a man who has just one week for fishing and man's Vade Mecum of Fly Fishing six of the days he spends reading Isaac Walton's Complete Angler, and Wheatley's Rod and Line, and Scott's Fishing in Northern Waters and Pull- Trout, and then on Saturday morning, his last day, goes to the river to ply his art. But that day the fish will not bite, and late on Saturday night he goes to his home with empty basket.

But do not spend your time fishing with hook and line. Why did not James, the son of Zebedee, sit on the wharf at Cana, his feet hanging over the lake, and with a long pole and a worm on the hook dipped into the wave wait for some mullet to swim up and be caught? Why did not Zebedee spend his afternoon trying to catch one eel? No, that work was too slow. These men were not mending a hook and line; they were mending their nets. So let the church of God not be content with having here one soul and next month another soul brought into the kingdom. Sweep all the seas with nets—scoop nets, seine nets, drag nets, all encompassing nets, and take the treasures in by hundreds and thousands and millions, and nations will be born in a day and the hemispheres quake with the tread of a ransoming God. Do you know what will be the two most tremendous hours in our heavenly existence? Among the quadrillions of ages which shall roll on what two occasions will be to us the greatest? The day of our arrival there will be one of the two greatest. The second greatest, I think, will be the day when we shall have put in parallel lines before us what Christ did for us and what we did for Christ, the one so great, the other so little. That will be the only embarrassment in heaven. My Lord and my God! What will we do and what will we say when on one side are placed the Saviour's great sacrifices for us and our small sacrifices for him; his exile, his humiliation, his agonies on one hand and our poor, weak, insufficient sacrifices on the other. To make the contrast less overwhelming let us quickly mend our nets, and, like the Galilean fishermen, may we be divinely helped to cast them on the right side of the ship.

A real home is less picturesque than an ideal one, but a deal more comfortable.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

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The Lord's Supper.—Matt. 26: 17-30.

Commentary.—17. First day of the feast.—The 14th of Nisan was the day of preparation and hence called the first day of the feast, although the feast properly did not begin until the 15th of Nisan, which, according to the Jewish reckoning, commenced immediately after sunset of the 14th, and was the day on which the Passover was eaten. The celebration continued until the 21st. Ex. xii. 18-20. Of unleavened bread—So called because at this feast only unleavened bread was allowed. It symbolized three things: 1. The haste with which they fled from Egypt, not having time to wait for bread to rise. Ex. xii. 34, 39. 2. Their sufferings in Egypt, hence called the bread of affliction. Deut. xvi. 3. 3. Their purity as a consecrated nation, since fermentation was the beginning of putrefaction, and leaven was thus a symbol of impurity. Newhall. Where wilt thou—Jesus had no home of His own, and the disciples knew that some place must be chosen at once. That we prepare—"That which was required consisted of a room furnished with a table and couches; and for food, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, wine, and a paschal lamb, which must be slain in the temple between three and five o'clock, and cooked in a private house."

18. Go into the city—Luke says that Peter and John were sent. They were now at Bethany and Jesus sends them to Jerusalem. Say unto him—Say unto the master of the house, "who was probably a disciple, but secretly, like many others, for fear of the Jews (John xii. 42); and this may explain the suppression of his name." The Master saith—The Teacher saith. My time is at hand—The time of his death, elsewhere called his hour.—Henry. Jesus knew that in a few hours he would yield up his life. At thy house—This message came stranger to us than it would to the man, even if he had little knowledge of Jesus.

19. Did Jesus have appointed them—They obeyed in every particular and found everything to happen as Jesus had foretold. "Those who would have Christ's presence with them must strictly observe his instructions." 20. The even was come—It was probably that while the sun was beginning to decline in the horizon that Jesus and the disciples descended once more over the Mount of Olives into the Holy city.—Edersheim. Sat down—or reclined, according to the custom of that time. It was at this time that the disciples strove among themselves as to which should be accounted the greatest. Luke xxii. 24. The strife probably begun when they were taking their positions at the table.

21. As they did eat—The Passover, not the Lord's supper. "He tasted first the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, before the lamb was served." The significance of the Passover—1. It marked the beginning of the Jewish nation. 2. It reminded them of the mercy of God in protecting their first born. 3. It commemorated their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. 4. It reminded them of their sin and need of atonement. 5. Unleavened bread signified separation from sin. 6. Bitter herbs signified repentance. One of you—How sad! One who is pledged to be faithful and true. Jesus was troubled in spirit. John xiii. 21. Shall betray me—Judas had already agreed to betray Him. The Saviour was not taken by surprise.

22. Exceeding sorrowful—Because He was to be betrayed and because one of his number was about to perform the dastardly act. Is it I?—They also asked themselves the question. 23. He that dippeth—The thought of verse 21 is repeated. It was at this point that Peter beckoned to John, who was leaning on Jesus' bosom, to ask Jesus who it should be (John xiii. 26-27); and Jesus gave them a sign by which they knew.

24. Goeth—To the cross and to death. As it is written—In such Scriptures as Isaiah 53. Woe unto that man—"A sad statement of a terrible fact." Had not been born—This proves conclusively that for the lost soul there is no redemption. 25. Is it I?—Judas tried to cover his hypocrisy and wickedness by asking the question. He knew that he was even now seeking an opportunity to do this very thing, and if he had not been spiritually blind he would have known that Jesus knew all about it too. Thou hast said—A Hebrew form of affirmation.

26. Took bread—took the loaf or thin cake of unleavened bread, which was before him.—Clarke. Blessed it—Involved the blessing of God upon it. Brake it—The act was designed to shadow forth the wounding, piercing and breaking of Christ's body on the cross.—Clarke. This is my body—This bread represents my body. 27. The cup—"The word 'wine' is not used, but 'cup,' 'the fruit of the vine' (v. 29), so that 'unfermented grape juice' was all that was used." Gave thanks—it was like giving thanks over the shedding of his own blood. Drink ye all—They were all to drink of this. Mark says, "They all drank of it."

28. Is my blood—Represents my blood. "The sins of the world are put away, not merely through the influence of Christ's life, teachings and example, but by His blood that was poured out for lost man." Of the covenant (R. V.)—It was an old covenant renewed, and thus a new promise to men that God would provide a great salvation, and use His infinite wisdom and love in seeking to save a lost world. For many—For all mankind.

Remission of sins—"For the taking away of sins." But although the atonement is made yet no man's sins are taken away, only as he repents and turns to God.

29. Not drink henceforth—He would not eat and drink with them again; this was their last meal together. When I drink it new—When I drink new wine—"wine of a different nature from this"—in the kingdom of God.

30. Sang a hymn—Which was always sung at the close of the paschal feast; it consisted of six psalms, Psalms 113 to 118. Into the mount of Olives—Where we will presently find them again, on this eventful night.

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ himself after He had eaten the passover with His disciples on that memorable night in which He was betrayed. See I Cor. xi. 23-25, where a distinct and complete account of the last supper is given by St. Paul, to whom it was communicated by the Saviour himself.

The elements used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper were bread and wine—literal bread, literal wine, by the declaration, "This is my body," "this is my blood." Christ did not design to teach His disciples that they were then eating His own body and drinking His own blood. His body was yet alive, and the disciples knew that what they were eating was bread, not flesh; and what they were drinking was wine, not blood. St. Matthew does not say that Jesus took His body and broke it, but He took bread and broke it, and it was real bread. "This is my blood" is not to be taken literally, but figuratively. He afterward called it "the fruit of the vine," and such it was, not His blood which was soon to be shed for the remission of the sins of the world.

Its design.—The Passover was a type of Christ. The Saviour substituted the Lord's supper for that ordinance. It is a memorial of his death. "As the Passover had pointed forward to His prospective death for the world, so this new sacrament was instituted to point back to His death," and is designed, 1. To preserve a grateful and affectionate remembrance of His suffering and sacrifice. "This do in remembrance of Me." 2. As a perpetual reminder of the efficacy and extent of the atonement. 3. As a testimony of Christian fellowship. See I Cor. x. 16, 17. 4. It teaches that our life is in Christ, and only as we continue in communion with Him is our spiritual life sustained. "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever."

All true Christians are proper subjects to observe this ordinance. It is not to be denied to any merely because of their church relations. It is the duty of every true Christian, of every person who has the consciousness of an honest purpose to live a Christian life, to avail himself of this means of grace as often as practicable.

A CENTURY OF SUCCESS

In Spreading the Gospel in Foreign Lands.

To the Editor:

Sir,—A century respects the nineteenth century, and especially the Victorian era, has been remarkable, but in none more so than in the unexampled expansion of foreign mission enterprise. The following figures and facts make this apparent, and kindly bright hopes, almost exultation, in the minds of all who look and long for this universal reign of the Prince of Peace.

At the beginning of the century there were six mission societies. Now there are 537, including women's auxiliary societies.

The total amount contributed for this work a hundred years ago was \$75,000. Last year the contributions amounted to \$19,000,000.

There are 1,600,000,000 of people in the world, and the Bible has been translated in whole or in part into the language of 1,200,000,000, so that three-fourths of the world's population can now have the Bible in their own tongue.

There are now 22,000,000 children attending Sabbath school, and of these about 10,000,000 are in foreign missions, and of these 140,000 are in mission college institutes and high schools.

At the beginning of the century there were no native evangelists, whilst now there are 77,338 natives teaching the gospel to their own people.

There were then no Bible societies. Now there are eighty; and the British and Foreign Bible Society alone issues 4,500,000 Bibles or portions of Bibles a year.

There are fourteen great national student organizations comprising fourteen hundred separate organizations, with a total membership of nearly 80,000 students and professors who are studying missions and preparing for foreign mission work.

There are on foreign mission communion rolls 1,317,684 names. If we include others who have abandoned their idols, and who, though not on the communion roll, are under Christian instruction, the total is 4,414,234.

The first women's foreign mission society in England was organized in 1834. The first in America was organized in 1861. There are now 208 women's societies, and they contributed last year about \$4,000,000.

Then one-third of the world was unknown. The social, moral and spiritual conditions are now known. There is rapid communication by railroad, steamship and electricity. Printing is rapid and inexpensive.

Beginning with such facilities, knowledge and organization, what will the present century bring forth? All things are possible to Him who leads His hosts to certain victory. Let us be co-laborers with Him. R. P. MacKay, Foreign Mission Secretary.