



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Many of you here today are parents or even grandparents. I know that for me having a grandchild is a special blessing. A blessing that has been difficult to appreciate, especially in person for the last year. But one of the things I especially enjoy about my grandson Emmett is his unending curiosity. WHY? He gets excited when he figures out how to do something or he show great joy when he sees something for the first time. He just has such a sense of wonder about the world. I am sure you have all experienced that with your children and grandchildren too. Have you heard the expression about how we all wish that we could see the world through the eyes of a child?

As we age we somehow loose that ability to sense the wonder of it all. The mystery and magnificence of the world, created by God, should always inspire us with awe, but some how be become too accustomed to the world and fail to see the joy in creation that once was ours, when we were young.

In fact if we were to be in awe all the time about things in the world, people would probably want to lock us up and throw away the key. Just imagine if we were still finding our feet and toes fascinating as a baby does. We would not go far in life. Or if we continued to eat spaghetti or our birthday cake with our hands, we probably would not be invited out to dinner often. People would think we were disgusting. Yet there are some things that we were amazed at as a child that still hold true today.

As a kid, we played outside and ran from house to house. We played tag or basketball or kick the can. We ran. Seems like kids don't do much of that stuff anymore unless it is in gym class, but we were always running. As adults, some might run for exercise but I think most of us run only if we are really late for an appointment. How odd.

Another thing I find unusual today is fishing. Now don't get me wrong, I love a good fish fry. As a kid my dad took me fishing as a treat a few Saturdays during the summer. But one thing I never understood was why we spent the day fishing, only to catch fish and then throw them back in the lake. Just did not make good sense to me.

Well, as an adult I understand the catch and release philosophy. Sometimes it is guided by the regulations and size of the fish. Sometime particular fish are not good eating. But just think about the poor fish that get thrown back in the lake. They swim away with a hole in their lip. Wonder how they explain that to their relatives. Well, guess we will never know that one, but now imagine with me the fisherman in our Gospel story for today.

There are a bunch of men fishing in the Sea of Galilee, Simon and Andrew among them. They throw their nets into the sea to catch fish. Just think what would have happened if one of them threw their catch back into the water. The others would have thought that they had lost their minds. Their wives would not be very happy with no supper on the table and because fishing was their occupation, their bank accounts would start looking a bit shabby.

Even harder to imagine would be a couple of fishermen just walking away from their nets and their father and their hired hands to follow a rabbi who said they were going elsewhere to learn how to fish for people. Strange? You bit! Mysterious? Absolutely! Compelling? Without a doubt!

Well, it is true that Jesus did catch himself a bunch of fish in today's gospel and he meant business. He was not going to "catch and release" any of them. Some might say Jesus caught them off guard. Jesus meant business. He was not on vacation. He was on a mission, a mission to save the world.

When Jesus caught these men, he was not offering them an invitation for a luxuriously vacation. Neither was Jesus going to throw them back into the water. When Jesus caught these men, he swept them up into the Kingdom of

God and was not letting go. Remember from last week, when God calls, we should follow.

God's call means that He wants to rescue, not only these disciples by the Sea of Galilee, but us, from a way of life that means certain death. He wants us all to know the Kingdom of God. He wants us all to share in His promises of forgiveness, abundant and eternal life.

In the allegory, it is the devil that will hook you and watch you squirm, only to throw you back into the darkness of the deep sea, full of holes. Filled with shame and a hole in your lip, the devil can catch you and release you to live in anguish.

But, we know that Jesus will catch us in his net and give us new life. NO holes in our lips, no regrets. All sin is washed away by his blood, on the cross. And we will belong to Christ forever. Through His grace we should forever be in awe, with the faith of a child, to live out our lives in his kingdom.

In our Old Testament reading this morning we do have a story of catch and release. Jonah, tried to escape God's net, but it did not do him any good. God was and is the Master Fisherman. God used a really big fish, a whale for bait and caught himself an angry little prophet. Jonah was not willing to follow God's request and so God had him swallowed up in the belly of a whale. And even though Jonah was coughed up out of the belly of the whale, God did not let go of Him.

God does not play "catch and release" He wanted Jonah to turn around and follow his call. To be the prophet God intended for him to be.

And it is no different for us. God does not want us follow Him only when it is convenient or easy. We cannot pick and choose. It is not ours to judge who needs to hear the word of God and who does not. And there is no time like the present to invite everyone we find whether they are good or bad, black or white, likeable or unlikable, republicans or democrats, rich or poor, popular or not, educated or un. It is for us to call everyone to the Lord. We just need to throw in our nets and haul them all in. No "catch and release". And hopefully we will not need to be swallowed up by a whale to understand what God is calling us too. Not even a whale of a problem can separate you from the

Almighty fisherman. When we are caught, we all are called to help others “get caught”

Have you all heard the story about the pelicans in California? If you have ever seen pelicans in action, you know that they are great fishermen or fisher-birds. Well, these pelicans were hanging out near a fleet of fishing boats. The fishermen on the boats would pull into the little harbor, and clean the fish right on the spot, throwing the heads and the rest into the water. By the way, this is an old story and the fisherman’s actions would not fly today in most harbors, I’m sure.

The pelicans picked up on this, and began eating the leftover, without having to go out fishing. And I supposed that if you are a pelican, it was pretty good eating. So all the birds had to do was to wait for the fishing boats to come into the harbor and ‘dinner was served”.

After a while, the fisherman found out that they could sell the fish waste, and so they stopped chucking it into the water. The pelicans were caught unprepared. They continued to sit and wait for the fishing boats to come in and throw free food in the water. And they grew thinner and thinner and seemed able to do nothing about their situation.

Wildlife officials came to check out what was going on, and concluded that the pelicans had forgotten how to fish. So what they did was to bring pelicans in from another area to join the flock and teach the starving birds how to fish again.

Each Sunday when you come to worship here at Christ the Servant, I hope that you come here to our restaurant and our bait and tackle shop. Come to be fed and to learn over and over again how to go fishing. Come and receive the spiritual renewal you need to go out, prepared with supplies in hand that will make your fishing trip a success.

And folks, if we become like the lazy pelicans, please let us come before God and ask him to make us good fishers of men. Let him catch us again and set us up to relive the awe of His creation and to remember the awesomeness of new life in Jesus Christ. **AMEN**