

Sermon Title: **Casting Our Nets**

Bible: **John 21:1-14**

Where & When: Sunday at Gilroy UMC on Feb. 16, 2020

Audience: about 34 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for giving us this church. Thank you for your Spirit upon us. Thank you so much for calling us fishers of men. Please guide and lead us according to your will. Be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. 2020 Gathering of the Orders

As a pastor of the Gilroy United Methodist Church, I attended “A Gathering of the Orders” in Livermore the last week of January. “A Gathering of the Orders” is an annual 3-day retreat for those pastors and deacons who serve and have served the United Methodist Church in the California-Nevada Annual Conference. We worshipped together, learned together, shared our joys and challenges, prayed for each other, enjoyed good food, and played bocce ball, an Italian bowling game. Every year, the theme is different. This year's theme was “Casting Our Nets,” based on the Scripture that we read today. Over the course of three days, there were four worship services, four speakers, workshops, small group gatherings, etc. I would like to share what I learned and meditated on during this gathering of the orders.

2. The Theme: Casting Our Nets

When we read today's Scripture, and when you heard of the theme "Casting Our Nets," what image comes to you? Most of Jesus' disciples were real fishermen. Fishing was not a hobby for them. They were professional fishermen. However, in this Scripture, they were not able to catch fish. They, the professional fishermen, caught nothing. Then, a man came to them, and told them to cast their nets to the other side of the boat. Who was this man? Was he a fisherman? He was not a fisherman. He was a carpenter, maybe, like a modern day handyman. The carpenter advised the fishermen as to where to cast their nets. Does this make sense? Who knows fishing, not as a hobby, but as a profession? A carpenter or a fisherman? As we read, when the fishermen followed the carpenter's direction, they caught so many fish that they could not haul them all in. The other fishermen came to help them.

Who was this carpenter? The carpenter was Jesus. I remember that when Jesus called his disciples, he said to them, "Follow me. And I will make you fishers of men." Do we follow Jesus? (Yes, we do). Then, does Jesus make us fishers of men? Do we cast our nets to the right side? Do we cast our nets? How many fish do we have in our nets? Do we at least have our nets? What nets do we have? These were my questions during the gathering of the orders.

3. Where To Cast Our Nets

I follow Jesus. I want to follow Jesus. How about you? Do you follow Jesus? Do you want to follow Jesus? Then, Jesus makes all of us fishers of men. Then, where do we need to cast our nets? On which side do we cast our nets? In the gathering of the orders, some pastors shared a couple of new church models such as messy church, dinner church, and some

possible new ministries. That's because what we have done before is not catching any fish. The world is changing, and the community is changing. The people are already changing. I should clarify what I am saying here. God's love, and our love and passion cannot be changed.

However, how to express or show our love to others needs to be changed, because we do love others.

As you see, I am not Jesus. That's why I follow Jesus. Unfortunately or thankfully, I cannot, I do not hear Jesus' real voice. Jesus does not say to me, "Hwapyoung and the Gilroy congregation, do this ministry, and then you will catch more people." It is true that God does not speak to me in this way. But I would like to discern God's calling to me and to this church. Which ministry do we need here and now? What message do we need here and now? As God blessed us last year, I am looking for where God is calling us to go here and now. That's because fish are already moving and because God might guide us to cast our nets in another place, unlike our last few years' ministries.

4. The Net Was Not Torn

While I pray to discern God's calling, what we can do is to prepare the nets. In the Scripture, the fishers caught many fish. However, the net was not torn. The net was not torn, because they prepared well before casting the nets. This is what we can do. We can prepare our nets. We can plan our church events and ministries. We can pour out our love and passion. We might not catch anything. We might fail. But please do not give up, as long as we have our love and passion. In the Scripture, Jesus came to the disciples after daybreak, after the disciples were

struggling all night. Catching nothing is not a failure. It is a process of discerning God's calling to us. When we are ready to listen, Jesus will tell us and guide us to catch many fish. Then, our nets cannot be torn, because we are already ready.

For this summer, our church plan is to have a 2020 Vacation Bible School. If you are interested in volunteering, please come to me. With your help, I plan to have a time to explain more about our 2020 Vacation Bible School. When it is ready, I will announce it in detail. For this coming Lenten season, we will have an Ash Wednesday Service, and on Fridays, a Centering Prayer Time with a Soup Supper. There will be a Good Friday Service and an Easter Service. Even though we do not have any kids yet, we will prepare an Easter Egg Hunt for Easter Sunday. We are fishers of men. Please pray for these events. We will prepare our nets, and cast our nets. God will let us know where to cast our nets. That's because we are God's own fishers. God will use us!

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you so much for calling us your fishers. Please help us to prepare our nets with love and passion. And please give us your unfailing love. And please open our ears to follow your will. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions.

1. What nets do you have?
2. What fish do you have in your nets?