Dragnet

Matthew 13:47-50

A Sermon for Children

With Study Questions

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Dragnet

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Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and _gathered some of every kind, –48– which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. –49– So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, _ _separate the wicked from among the just, –50– and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:47-50).

Reviewing the Parables

- In the Parable of the Sower we learned that the heart of the growth of the kingdom is the message—the sowing of seeds.

- In the Parable of the Mustard Seed we learn that the growth of the kingdom is gradual but sure.

- In the Parable of the Leaven we learn that the kingdom will permeate every aspect of life and culture.

- In the Parable of the Wheat and Tares we learn that the kingdom will have a mixture of good and evil which will no be fully separated until judgment day.

- In the parables The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price we learn of those who, by the grace of God, come to realize the value of being a citizen of the kingdom of God and their willingness to fully commit.

  We now turn to the parable of the dragnet.

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Dragnet

Some restaurants serving seafood will advertise their fish as "line-caught". They want their patrons to know that no dolphins were accidentally caught in the fishermen's nets. This parable is not talking about line-caught fish.

This type of net (SAGE_NE_ (_____) as distinguished from a smaller casting net, could be up to a mile long. It wasn't like the kind of circular net my dad and I used to catch crabs off the Redondo Pier when I was a kid, which was only about three feet across. The dragnet would have weights on one side and be dragged along the sea drawing in all sorts of fish.

Wheat and Tares Distinction

This parable might appear to be similar to the parable of the Wheat and the Tares, in that they all seem to be together; but there are some differences. In the parable of the Wheat and Tares the field is then entire world where both good and evil grow together. Fishermen (and Jesus was surrounded by them) would recognize there is no dragnet large enough to encompass the entire sea (any sea). There would always be some fish left in the water.

The distinction in terms of activity has to do with the imagery of the net itself. With the Wheat and Tares they grow on their own, but here they are being gathered into a net. You don't catch wheat.

Gospel and Church

Let me explain right up front what I think the launching of the net is and who I think is in the net. 1) the launching of the net into the sea is the preaching of the gospel and 2) those within the net to be those within the visible church.

Preaching the Gospel

Jesus earlier called Peter and his brother, saying, **"_Follow Me, and __I will make you fishers of men_" (Matthew 4:19)?** A dragnet doesn't launch itself. Christians are called to be fishers of men. The casting of a net

this size requires an entire crew; a crew of men who recognize the deplorable state of men who are

> **like fish of the sea, Like creeping things *that have* no ruler over them (Habakkuk 1:14)?**

As much as we try to anthropomorphize fish, *Finding Nemo* is not the moral and intellectual reality of marine biology. Men are called to properly rule over creation as God's ministers and magistrates (Genesis 1:26). And it should grieve our hearts to see other men living like the beasts, ignorant of their own slavery.

> **But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart __that form of doctrine to which you were _delivered. –18– And __having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:17, 18).**

In this respect the net is not a device which enslaves but rather rescues—one who is a slave to righteousness cannot, in the common sense, be thought a slave. The net is bringing its inhabitants in a direction which has purpose and objective. We rejoice that we're in the net!

The net's target is the shore and those within are to be ever reminded that the shore will someday come. Those fish outside the net swim aimlessly; willfully ignorant of their own destinies…they are more akin to the tares who lie outside the boundaries of the visible church.

Visible Church

Those within the net are those who in the visible church are being drawn to the shore of the final resurrection and Judgment Day. This net is drawing some of every kind (good and bad). This is a great warning to the church. We should not think of the church as some uncontaminated, entity unassailable by the world and its lies. The church may be the visible kingdom of God on earth, but it is not heaven.

Preaching the Gospel to the Church

There are some of every kind within the visible kingdom of God. This tells me that the gospel must ever be preached within the kingdom

itself. It is not merely a message for those outside but for those inside as well. There is no telling who does and does not believe.

The gospel must be preached and the warning of the coming shore of judgment must not be ignored. For it is not the net which truly saves but Christ and Christ alone. You may be a member in good standing of a Christian church while the net is dragged to the shore only to find that the net has dragged you, as Jesus teaches here, to the wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Church Discipline

Some have concluded that parables like this diminish the need for church discipline. Not so. Not only would that be in violation of the clear teaching of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4, 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 John 2:10; etc.), but it violates the spirit of Christian love to allow the net to continue to pull its inhabitants to judgment rather than glory. We should desire to win our brother (Matthew 18:15).

Inclusion in the net may be more dangerous than being outside the net. In church discipline the rebellious person is removed from the net (1 Corinthians 5:4, 5) in order for them to not be deceived that the mere inclusion in the net will save them.

Mixed Church

Another great warning here is that a mixed net means mixed doctrine.

> **How the gold has become dim! *How* changed the fine gold! The stones of the sanctuary are _scattered At the head of every street. [2] The precious sons of Zion, __Valuable as fine gold, How they are _regarded __as clay pots, The work of the hands of the potter (Lamentations 4:1, 2)!**

It should grieve Christians every time they see Christ's church characterized in petty and burlesque fashions. And although the secular media may seize every opportunity to ridicule the church, it is not as if today's church doesn't provide ample material. Scan the church ads and marquees. Is the church refined as gold or are we reaching outside the net, gathering the pond scum and molding it into the idols of our thought and worship?

As the church is pulled through the sea of history, let us be mindful that the shore is coming. May we all arrive clothed in the righteousness of Christ. For every man, in the separation, would be found wicked (SAPROS (__π___, corrupt, rotten) if apart from Christ. May we, with the Apostle Paul, know the need to…

> **…be found in Him (Christ), not having _my (our) own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but __that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith (Philippians 3:9).**

Let us not deceive ourselves as church members and be Christians in name only.

> **And Jesus said to them, _"_I am the bread of life. __He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never _thirst (John 6:35).**

It is ironic how shipwrecked survivors end up dying of thirst in a lifeboat floating in the Pacific. There are those in the church who continue to thirst because they have no faith in Christ.

-_Jesus said to them, "_Have you understood all these things?_" They said to Him, "_Yes, __Lord._" -52- Then He said to them, "_Therefore every __scribe instructed __concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure __*things* new and old._" -53- Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there (Matthew 13:51-53).

Housekeeping

Jesus finished these parables with a different kind of parable. A parable directed to those who would instruct within His kingdom.

He first makes sure they understand. A spiritual leader without understanding is like a cloud without rain. Peter likens them to…

> **…brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, (they) speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption (2 Peter 2:12).**

I once spoke to a man in ministry who, downplaying his need to understand sound doctrine, described himself as a warm body for Jesus. Jesus does not ask His followers if their bodies are warm; He asks if they understand.

Christians are to be scribes. Scribes did not merely write (they weren't human photo-copiers), they were to seek the Lord and present His message. Ezra was a Scribe. We read that he…

> **-…had prepared his heart to _seek _the Law of the Lord, and to do *it,* and to __teach statutes and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:10).**

A good scribe is like a householder bringing out of his treasures things old and new. Jesus taught afresh. His teaching might have been considered new. But it would be foolish to dismiss that which came before the incarnation (the Old Testament) and teach only from the new. For the teaching of Jesus was in no way inconsistent with the teachings of Moses and the prophets.

The responsible scribe brings forth the whole book. Paul taught

> **For I have not __shunned to declare to you __the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).**

The spirit of the age tells the church, "only that which is essential!" And we're left to define *essential* by the wisdom of man. Jesus teaches

> **_Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. -18- For assuredly, I say to you, __till heaven and earth pass away, one __jot or one __tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. -19- __Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them,* he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-19).**

May those within the dragnet of Christ's church heed their calling to be wise and noble scribes.

Questions for Study

1. Review the kingdom parables (page 2).
2. What is a dragnet (page 3)?
3. What are some distinctions between the parable of the Wheat and Tares and Dragnet (page 3)?
4. What does the launching of the dragnet represent (pages 3, 4)?
5. What does the net itself represent (pages 3, 4)?
6. Who is in the net? How should we respond? What are the dangers (pages 4-6)?
7. How are Christians to be "scribes" (pages 6-8)?