

Sermon from 02/04/2007

## A HUMAN CATCH

Texts: 1 Cor. 15:1-11 & Luke 5:1-11

*Zion United Church of Christ*

*Norwood, Ohio*

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Zion UCC

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### **A Message for Internet Readers/Hearers:**

Friends, I pray that you find these messages inspirational, encouraging, and of benefit in your spiritual adventure and seeking. Please feel free to email me at [danieljanetmeister@hotmail.com](mailto:danieljanetmeister@hotmail.com) with your questions, comments or reactions to this message. This message is the frame upon which I ask God to communicate His message to the congregation of Zion United Church of Christ. Often, additional insights are added from the pulpit, which are not contained here within the written text. Please take the time not just to 'read' this message, but also to listen to it...to hear what the Spirit may be saying to your heart. The best way to appreciate the full impact of this message is to join us for worship on Sunday morning, 10 a.m. You will find a warm welcome and a congregation that you can make the home of your spiritual journey! If you cannot attend Zion United Church of Christ, do consider attending worship at a Bible-believing church in your own neighborhood.

*With God's Love and Mine, Rev. Dr. Daniel Meister*

TODAY, THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT PEOPLE USE A VARIETY OF DEVICES—  
FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL, TO SOCIAL, TO FINANCIAL—TO INFLUENCE  
OTHERS.

Likewise, the Church—down through the ages—has endeavoured to influence people spiritually [remember, we are not Kroger-like in our values! – *ref. my message from the Archives, entitled "On Being Believers"*].

At one time the white, Anglo-Saxon missionary movement of the early to mid 1800s was predicated upon the heartfelt assumption that western European types had the Light of the Gospels...and this Light was to be shared (as Jesus commands us, Mt. 28:19) with those living in the darkness—particularly, it was felt, to those living in Africa, India, China & South America.

In many ways, there were genuine spiritual successes during this missionary period with thousands of converts to Christ in remote, hostile places where the name of Jesus had never been uttered!

Many missionaries—both Protestant and Roman Catholic—gave their hearts—and even shed their blood—to establish schools, build hospitals and erect churches.

[Ex. Wasn't Bethesda North Hospital started by Methodist Deaconesses?]

In addition to spreading the Gospel, there also occurred an unfortunate by-product in the imposition of white, western values that, in some places, nearly wiped out the indigenous cultures of the people groups whom “we” most desired to help.

### TODAY, THE TABLES HAVE TURNED SOMEWHAT.

The nations and peoples that, over a century earlier, had received the Gospel, now looked upon Europe and the USA with a great disappointment.

That’s because the Gospel that we once championed, in the dark and remote corners of the globe, was now lost within a rising tidal wave of secularization.

Today, the West is becoming more and more secular and less and less religious.

What is secularism, you wonder?

Briefly, it is the attempt to try to frame, comprehend and experience life without any referent to God.

Today, it is Africa, South America, and the nations of the Orient that are sending Christian missionaries (Chinese, Brazilian, Kenyan) to “we” who have sold our souls to the gods of human comfort and self-sufficient individualism.

If anything, the many creaturely comforts that we daily enjoy (that many nations still envy) still do not bring the deep personal and spiritual satisfaction that so many are longing for.

Although Madison Avenue does its utmost to try to influence us: that buying their products will somehow make us more harmonious, balanced, wise and confident human beings...

...most of us, after parting with our hard-earned cash, are still left with a nagging sense of emptiness and a lack of personal fulfilment.

### I HAVE ENJOYED THE CHALLENGE, UPON RETURNING TO THE USA, OF TRYING TO DECIPHER THE CRYPTIC CODES OF PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES.

These license plates always get you thinking!

Usually about the owner/driver, their personality, their values, and the things they think are valuable, cute or humorous.

Travelling the I-75 this week, I was driving behind a beautiful, black BMW SUV with all the “Blingage”—and the license had the following message on it:

### **U NV ME**

I guess because I was in Britain for so long, I initially thought: “Hmm: Utah, Nevada, Maine?”

“Had they lived in these three states and were somehow trying to communicate this to their new friends in Ohio?”

I read the letters again: **U NV ME**

Oh, I got it: “You Envy Me!”

Hmm! I guess the used Ford Taurus I own wouldn’t even rate next to this bold and beautiful BMW SUV.

But here’s what I do know...Mr. BMW:

I’ve never had one funeral in 16 years where someone had their “bling-bling” buried alongside next to them!

St. Paul cries out, “I’ve learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I’m just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I’ve found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.” (*Phil. 4:10ff, The Message*)

My answer to Mr....or Ms. BMW is this:

My God is more precious to me than silver, gold or the Bavarian Motor Works!

Say “Godliness with contentment is great gain”! [1 Tim. 6:6, KJV)

### JESUS MET A FEW BMW OWNERS IN HIS TIME.

And He let them know the following: Your BMW doesn’t get you any extra brownie points with God!

Before God, the Cadillac is equal to the Ford Pinto!

It’s what’s up with the driver that matters!

When Jesus’ soon-to-be disciples hauled all those fish into their boats, it was not meant to be a lesson that focused on the fish!

It was about showing these guys—these expert fishermen—that people are more important than fish.

Sometime we miss this in the Church.

We think the budget is more important that the people are.

We think the Trust Fund is more important than the people are.

We think that the building is more important than the people are.

We think that our heritage is more important than the people are.

We think that our name is more important than the people are.

We think that our reputation is more important than the people are.

You see this incident in the Gospels forms one of the most amazing stories about how the disciples were drafted into the service of our Saviour.

So what I want to say is this: Every Christian is a “Called” Christian!

You know, in the pastoral ministry, before we serve a church, we are “called” to it.

But, I think that smacks a bit of elitism.

Every Christian (not just Pastors) is called!

Friends, there is no such thing as a “Non-Called” Christian.

They don’t exist!

So what were you called to do?

It’s a catechism. [I’ll give you the answer]:  
You’re called to catch people!

Oh, you mean people who are imperfect people?

People who are sometimes nasty people?

A bit shallow people and those whom I’d rather not associate with!

Yup! They’re the ones!

Jesus doesn’t call us into an elite, specialized club where “we” get to pick carbon-copy, cookie-cutter replicas of ourselves!

I’D LIKE YOU TO CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR A SECOND.

Now, I want you to make a mental picture in your mind.

Clean off the slate.

Get blank for God for a moment.

Now, I want you to picture the VERY LAST person that you’d ever want to see join Zion Church.

You know who I mean.

Your embarrassing kids!

Your neurotic parents!

Your overly intrusive neighbour!

Your ego-tripping boss!

Your aloof, goof-off co-worker!

The retail clerk who constantly complains about their job!

Can you see them?

Now, that's exactly who Jesus wants here!

Now, if you get a few of the nice people here, too—well that's just a bonus!

FRIENDS, THE WHOLE THREE YEARS OF JESUS' MINISTRY WERE CONSUMED WITH THIS ONE PREOCCUPATION:

...getting people into the Net.

I didn't say "onto" the Net...but "into" the Net.

[Say "into the Net" with me].

He called the high and the mighty, the half-wits, the losers, the heart-broken, and the "I Should Have Known Better" types to be caught up into the God-life.

Now, I don't know of one church that is **not** in favour of having more people!

Yes?

But there's a big difference between "bums on seats" (as the Brits like to say), and disciples.

You see "bums on seats" aren't disciples at all....They are just "bums on seats."

But Zion Church doesn't just want "bums on seats"....You want disciples.

You want people here that are hungry and starving for God!

You want people here that are gonna speak about Jesus, work for Jesus, study His Word and shout His praises!

Amen?

You don't want "bums on seats."

You want imperfect people that are passionately struggling and fearlessly willing to join us on our journey to evangelizing Norwood.

Ooops! Did I just say "evangelizing Norwood?"

Sorry, my mistake—I think!

Every church I know wants more people.

HERE'S WHAT LUKE 5 TEACHES US ABOUT HOW TO HAVE MORE PEOPLE!

[Ready...are you listening?]

Number One: You gotta have Jesus in the boat.

The boat of your life!

No Jesus in your boat...no catch, right?!

Number Two: You have to trust that Jesus knows where the fish are.

Do not argue this point with God.

We are clueless about this.

But God is not.

Our job is not to repeatedly say "We need more people" (that gets old...besides God already knows this!)

Our job is to get on our knees and say, "God, where should we fish?" "Where should we let down our nets?"

Number Three: When Jesus identifies where the fish are, then and only then, do we let down our nets.

This is called "obedience."

Jesus is in charge of this fishing expedition.

Not me.

Not you.

Not our ancestors.

To catch people, we need the Presence of Christ, the Knowledge of Christ, and Obedience to Christ!

May our nets soon be bursting!

Questions for Reflection:

1. As a Christian, how am I allowing the world around me to influence me? Can I tell when I'm being influenced in ways that aren't pleasing to God?
2. Are there things in this life that I find enviable?
3. If there are, what do they do to my soul?
4. Are there characteristics that I see in other Christians that are enviable?
5. Am I a "called" Christian or a "cultural Christian?"
6. What is my plan to reach others with the Gospel in Norwood?
7. Can I name the three ways in which Jesus reaches others through us?