The Parable of The Dragnet
Message 7 in “The Parables of Jesus” Sermon Series
Scripture Text: Matthew 13:47-50

As we continue with our series of messages on “The Parables of Jesus” I would like for you to please turn with me in your Bibles once again to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter thirteen. Tonight we will be studying Jesus’ “Parable of The Net” (Dragnet in some translations).

MATTHEW 13:47-50

47 “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish.

48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous

50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

I believe Jesus’ disciples would have found this “Parable of The Dragnet” to be especially interesting since four of them, Peter, Andrew, James and John, had once made their living as commercial fishermen.

Likewise, I believe all of you avid fishermen here tonight will find this parable to be one you can easily relate to.

As I did in last week’s message, I would like to give you some background information on “fishing” during the time of Christ that will help you better understand this parable.
Fishing in Jesus’ time was not all that different than it is now. In those days they caught fish in one of four ways:

(1) One method was to use **A HOOK & LINE**.

Of course they didn’t have the fancy Shakespeare or Zebco rod and reels and all the exotic lures like we do today. And there wasn’t a Bass Pro Shop to be found any where.

**Hook & Line** fishing in Jesus’ time would have been very elementary. The fisherman would fasten a hook on the end of string along with some kind of weight, and simply drop the line in the water. When he felt the tug of the fish on the other end of the line he would simply start reeling the line in by hand.

This is likely the method Peter used in Matthew 17 when Jesus commanded him to take the coin out of the mouth of the first fish he caught to pay the Temple tax. (Matthew 17:24-27)

(2) Another common method of fishing in Jesus’ day involved the use of a **THROW NET**, called an “amphiblestron.”

For the sake of simplicity, I will just call it a throw net. The throw net was a small round net about 8’-10’ in diameter, that had brass or iron rings around it and a draw string to pull it closed.

The fisherman would cast the throw net into the water and as net sank hopefully it would trap some fish under it so when the fisherman pulled on the draw string it would close the net up like a basket and he would bring it back to the surface.

*Matthew 4:18 says, “As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were “casting a net” into the lake for they were fishermen."

In all likelihood, Peter and Andrew were using “a throw net” to catch fish that day.
A third method used to catch fish in Jesus’ day was to use a GILL NET.

A gill net or “diktuon” was a much larger net. It was used by commercial fishermen on the Sea of Galilee and in the Mediterranean.

The “spacing” on the gill net would only catch fish of a certain size. Small fish could easily swim through the openings, but larger fish would get their heads caught if they tried to escape.

Remember in John 21, following the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples had been out fishing all night long and not caught a thing. Jesus told them to “let down” or throw their net on the right side of the boat. And when they did, verse 6 says, “When they did they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.” Verse 11 gives even greater detail. It says, “It (the net) was full of LARGE FISH, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn.

The fact they caught 153 “large” fish tells us the disciples were using a “gill net.”

A fourth method used to catch fish in Jesus’ day was to use a DRAGNET.

The Aramaic term for “dragnet” was “sagene” from which we get our English word “seine.”

Dragnets were usually 200 to 400 feet long and 6 to 12 feet wide. They would have bundles of wood or papyrus reeds attached to the top for flotation and pieces of metal or rock on the bottom to weigh it down.

As many as 12 to 16 men would pull the dragnet through the water creating a “vertical wall” catching everything in its path, big fish, little fish, good fish and bad fish. Then when they got the dragnet to shore they would sort through the fish. They would put all the good fish in a basket and
dispose of the rest.

No doubt it is THE DRAGNET Jesus had in mind as He told this parable we are looking at this evening.

Well now that I have given you some background to this parable, let’s consider the interpretation.

-First, we will look at the PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION

-And secondly we will look at the PROPHETIC INTERPRETATION

I. The Practical Interpretation of The Parable

1. As we have noted, this parable is filled with images of FISHING.

   There’s a NET........a LAKE/SEA........and FISHERMEN.
   There’s GOOD FISH and BAD FISH .......,and the CULLING or SEPARATION of the GOOD from the BAD.

   But what does it all mean?

   (A) Let’s begin with the NET. The NET represents the perimeters of the Lord’s CHURCH throughout the world or the BOUNDS of the kingdom of heaven.

       Everywhere the GOSPEL has been preached is like the SWEEP of the net.

   (B) The SEA or lake in this parable represents the whole mass of lost HUMANITY.

       Some Bible scholars believe this refers more specifically to all the GENTILE nations where the gospel has been preached.

   (C) The FISHERMEN in this parable represents the original DISCIPLES of Jesus Christ as well as all who have become DISCIPLES since then.

       All disciples of Jesus Christ have a responsibility to be “FISHERS of MEN.”
MATTHEW 4:18-20  As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting their net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow Me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you FISHERS OF MEN.”

(D) The FISH in this parable, both good and bad, represents ALL who are in the CHURCH.

In the Church there are some who are SINCERE followers of Christ, while others are HYPOCRITES.

In the Church there are some who are TRUE believers, while others are only MAKE-believers.

The difference between “good fish” and “bad fish” in this parable isn’t like Santa’s “naughty and nice list” at Christmas. “Good fish” are those who are clothed with the RIGHTEOUSNESS of Christ and “bad fish” are those who are not.

(E) The SEPARATION of the fish points to the day when the authentic Christians will be set apart from the counterfeit Christians.

2. So to put it all together, the PRACTICAL INTERPRETATION of this parable is this.

After Christ completed His work on the cross and returned to His heavenly Father, He left His DISCIPLES here to FISH for the lost souls of men from every tribe and language and people and nation. (Revelation 5:9)

Every where the gospel has been preached, all types of people (like varieties of fish) have be drawn into the NET of the KINGDOM, some good and some bad.

But “joining a Church” or having one’s name on a “church roll book” doesn’t necessarily mean one is saved. Just because one belongs to a “church” (quote, unquote) and calls themselves “a Christian” (quote, unquote) doesn’t necessarily mean they have truly been born of God.
John makes this very clear in 1 John 5:12, “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Jesus doesn’t even give the slightest hint that all the FISH in the world will be gathered into the NET which refutes the false teaching of UNIVERSAL salvation that is popular today.

All within the “net” are not even SAVED, let alone those who are outside the “net” of the kingdom of heaven.

As for now, the good fish and the bad fish will remain together in “the net,” just like “the wheat and the weeds” remaining together until the time of the harvest. But one day the LORD, who knows and sees the heart of every man, will “cull” the fish, separating the good from the bad.

Now let’s briefly consider………

III. The Prophetic Interpretation of This Parable

1. Prophetically speaking this parable points us to the END of the AGE, when the ANGELS will separate “the good” from “the bad.”

2. You notice Christ’s emphasis in this parable is not so much on the “fishermen” who let down the “net“, but upon the “fishermen” who DREW up the NET.

   v. 48a “When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore.”

3. It is not up to you and me to distinguish between those who are truly SAVED from those who are not. This task is so important the LORD has entrusted it to supernatural beings.

4. The scrutiny of the angels will be EXACT!
They will not make any **MISTAKES!**

They won’t accidentally “Keep a **bad fish”** or “throw away a **good fish.””

5. When a fishermen sorts through his “catch” he puts the “keepers” the “good fish” in a cooler to filet and eat later and releases the “bad fish” back into the water from which it came.

6. When the angels sort through the fish in the “net” of the kingdom of heaven, the “good” will enter into eternal **LIFE** and the “bad” will cast into the **ETERNAL** fires of hell “where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

**CONCLUSION**

This “Parable of The Net” should be a sobering reminder to all of us about the importance of knowing exactly where we stand in our relationship with the **LORD**.

We must not place our hope of eternal life on the fact that we are a “good” person......or that we “do a lot of good deeds” for others......or that “we go to Church every Sunday”.......or......”that we are a member of such and such Church.” If our hope of salvation is in anything other than the **LORD JESUS CHRIST** we are deceiving ourselves.

**II CORINTHIANS 13:5** Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you---unless, of course you fail the test?

**PHILIPPIANS 2:12b** “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.....”

**II PETER 1:10,11** Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if
you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As we leave here tonight ask yourself this soul-searching question: “Will I be numbered among the good fish or among the bad fish?”

“Search my heart, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me.”