



**Northern Illinois District**  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

## **Crossing Thresholds: *To Others***

### **Session 8: Evangelism to the Nations**

#### **Catechetical Reflection**

The Third Article of the Apostles' Creed and Luther's "*What Does This Mean?*" to the Third Article provide an apt point of reflection for this study. Take special note of Luther's progression of thought in his answer. Luther's explanation teaches us that the Holy Spirit, working through the Gospel, unites the whole Church on earth. The Gospel crosses borders, languages, and cultures. Through the Gospel all believers are united as brothers and sisters in Christ.

#### **Scriptural Theme**

*"Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high'" (Luke 24:45-49 ESV).*

#### **Goal**

This is the final session of the study. The goal is to encourage participants to look for ways to share the Gospel and to cross thresholds to others. This particular session provides reflection on Jesus calling His first disciples and the journey they make with Jesus. They learn the teachings of Jesus and the life of Jesus. In the same way, we learn how to confess and proclaim. We also learn how to live as we live in the baptismal waters. This session provides an opportunity for participants to think about the various ways that Christians can support evangelism and bring the love of Christ to other ethnic groups.



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### **The Study — Matthew 4:18-25**

#### **PLACE**

##### **Where does this study take place?**

The beginning of chapter 4 speaks of the start of Jesus' public ministry following the temptation in the wilderness. While Jesus could have begun His work in the prominent area of Jerusalem, where does He call His first disciples and where does He go to begin teaching and healing?

Let's look back to the Old Testament, 2 Kings 15:29, to understand the history of this region. The northern kingdom of Israel eventually fell to the Assyrians, and the Jews were brought into captivity in Assyria. In the New Testament, the area was under the rule of the Roman Empire through Herod Antipas. Most of Galilee was a complex mix of rural and cosmopolitan, Jewish and Gentile.

##### **Why do you think Jesus chose Galilee as His first place for public ministry? (The Hebrew from Isaiah 9:1 speaks of this as something like, "Galil ha Gowyim," of "the region of the peoples/gentiles.")**

Jesus' approach was considered controversial to the Jewish elite of the day. They could not understand why He would consort with the enemy, the people groups who had hurt God's chosen people.

In our modern context, there is a hyper focus around segmenting everything through the viewpoint of the oppressor and the oppressed. Why do you think Jesus shared His message with both?

#### **LEARNING**

##### **Who did Jesus select as His first disciples? What was their occupation?**

Are we quick to judge people only by what they do? Jesus did not select highly educated Jewish scholars, leaders, political influencers, or the wealthy to adopt as His disciples. The first four disciples were merely fishermen. Despite being likely to need their occupation for providing for themselves and their family, these disciples heeded



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the call of Jesus. Also consider that while the sacrifice of Peter and Andrew was their occupation [*“immediately left their nets and followed him”*] (Matthew 4:20), the sacrifice of James and John was both the occupation and their father, who worked with them [*“Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him”*] (Matthew 4:22).

### **Read Matthew 4:19. What does Jesus tell Peter and Andrew?**

Some translations use the term *“fishers of men”* which is synonymous with *“fishers of people.”* What does Jesus mean by being *“fishers of men”*? Does Jesus direct Peter and Andrew to target only a certain people group?

### **Compare this last passage to Matthew 28:16-20.**

This reading is known as the Great Commission. Jesus instructs the eleven disciples to *“go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.”* Jesus earlier commanded Peter and Andrew to *“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* In short, the complete picture was to make disciples among all people and to have those new disciples “fish” and repeat that process. The Kingdom of Heaven does not favor one people group or type of person over another, nor does Christ tell us to exclude His message to certain groups. Christians today, being a legacy of the original disciples, also need to follow and spread the Gospel to all.

## **PRACTICE**

**If we acknowledge that as followers of Christ, we are to model our actions after Jesus, why is it difficult to follow His example of ministry to all, not just the community of people we typically associate with?**

In the account of the calling of Peter and Andrew as the first disciples in Luke 5, Jesus asked Peter to *“Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch”* (Luke 5:4). While Peter was skeptical as they had been fishing all day while catching nothing, following Jesus allowed them to catch so many fish that the boats began to sink.

As we go about our lives, why do you think we keep putting our nets out in the same place and come up empty? Are we willing to leave our former ways and let God fill our boats with more fish than we can imagine?



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### **Do you have barriers in your life about how you think others view you, how you view others, or what society says regarding how you should think about yourself?**

The calling of the disciples and others throughout the Bible should help us to recognize that it was not the remarkable position, merit, or identity of the people but rather God who is able to transform even the lowliest to be able to accomplish His magnificent will. Remind yourself each day that God's love is boundless and your worth to Him is as His precious creation. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).

### **Prayer**

Please consider this prayer as we reflect on how God calls us to continue in the ministry of what He started with the first disciples.

*Lord, thank you for giving us your Word. It provides us great comfort and clarity when facing the challenges of life. Let us continue to reflect on it and take it into our heart. Since we are in Christ by Baptism, remind us that our worth is not defined in our identity of race, background, vocation, status, or ability. Show us that we are each your loved creation. Help us to be able to serve those around us unconditionally. Remove any jealousy or envy and fill us with joy for each person who is brought into the Kingdom.*

*We thank you for the redemption available to us through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Give us the strength to follow Him each and every day. Amen.*