



## God's Net Worth – TouchPoint for January 20, 2021

**Mark 1:14-20 (MSG)** <sup>14-15</sup>After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee preaching the Message of God: “Time’s up! God’s kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message.”

### TOUCH POINT

<sup>16-18</sup>Passing along the beach of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew net-fishing. Fishing was their regular work. Jesus said to them, “Come with me. I’ll make a new kind of fisherman out of you. I’ll show you how to catch men and women instead of perch and bass.” They didn’t ask questions. They dropped their nets and followed.

<sup>19-20</sup>A dozen yards or so down the beach, he saw the brothers James and John, Zebedee’s sons. They were in the boat, mending their fishnets. Right off, he made the same offer. Immediately, they left their father Zebedee, the boat, and the hired hands, and followed.

**Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.**

*“Follow me. And I will make you fish for people.”*

*“Follow me. And I will make you NET people.”*

“NET people.” It was a different kind of 'net' Jesus asked Peter and Andrew to take up that day. A different kind of net than they were used to. It was a different kind of net and it would definitely catch something different.

The kingdom of God is at hand. It is time to 'net' people.

The word 'net' is common in our vocabulary. Though not in relation to people. We use it in relation to money. Net income. Net worth. The bottom line. Is this where the phrase came from? From those who fish. After all, what a fisher caught, what a fisher netted at the end of the day was what he or she went home with. All the fishing tales in the world about the one that got away are useless and beside the point. For a person who fishes, what you net at the end of the day is what is important.

What is your net? That is an interesting question isn't it?

Not what is your net worth? What is your net? What is it you net at the end of the day?

Not just in terms of money but people and relationships? What is your net? What do you hope to net, in your net, at the end of the day?

The question refers both to what I throw out into the world (what is the net I throw out) ... and what I take back in (what I net at the end of the day).

What is your 'net'? Is it possible for us to even think about without adding the word 'worth' or 'income'?

God has a very peculiar kind of net. It's not one about income, expenses and cost...but people. It's about people being caught up in God's net of grace – God's kingdom of grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

We don't discover God's net worth by looking at a balance sheet. We discover it by looking at creation and

all of its inhabitants. You and I are God's net worth. All of creation is God's net worth.

And God doesn't seem to be particularly concerned about who that net captures. Apparently, it is OK that tax collectors and prostitutes get caught up in that net. Why Jesus even says they are the first that God is going to haul in. You see, we don't make ourselves net-worthy. We are made net-worthy by God catching us up in grace.

God's net, God's bottom line, is that God will have mercy upon those God chooses to have mercy. That God will shower grace upon grace upon you and me.

God's net, God's bottom line, is that God will break through into your and my life to bring about a different bottom line than net worth...and instead, a bottom line of netting people...and relationships of grace.

How different would that be? Huh? To start thinking about my 'net relationships of grace' rather than 'net worth'. Well, that would almost require a death and resurrection on my part – wouldn't it?

You know, I had a funny experience this week looking at commentaries on this text. They all said the most typical things about fishing for people and catching people up in God's kingdom. There wasn't really anything new or eye opening that I read.

But then one commentator added this at the end of his comments, as an aside, just a little add on. He said in effect, "One should be careful in preaching this text in a church with many little children. Because hearing you speak, they may only picture a fish getting pulled onto a boat, gasping for breath and dying, and then being made into food for others... and we wouldn't want that."

Now I don't know what it says about me, but I often times find that my inspiration for these touchpoints come from what people say the text **doesn't** mean or how it **shouldn't** be used.

And I think to myself, "NO, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT IT MEANS! I COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER MYSELF!" Thank God for little children!

Because maybe before I think of myself as a fisherman or fisherwoman,

### **I need to think of myself as a fish.**

You see, to be caught up in God's kingdom, to be caught up in God's net of grace, mercy, and forgiveness, is to die, and to be reborn...

...and to gasp for breath not just FROM the old ways of living, but to gasp for breath IN this new life, this new birth, of being reborn as food of grace for others.

To be caught up in a kingdom that looks at 'net people' or 'net grace' is to die to the idea that life is about 'net income' or 'net worth'. There is a death involved in getting caught up in the kingdom of God and grace. It is a death to the world's ways of merit, reward and punishment, and measuring and comparing. It is a death to having to justify oneself or prove oneself. Now maybe a little child who can only think literally can't comprehend that. But you and I are not little children. And we are fully aware of how the world works. And we know how much we struggle against that kind of death, and that what it honestly takes is a God who will capture us – even against our will – and haul us in and leave us gasping for breath, from the old ways of living.

But it was that second part of the statement that got me: “and becoming food for others.” We are caught up in God's net of grace to become food for others...

...and now, my gasping for breath is not just FROM dying to the old ways of living, but now I'm gasping for breath IN this new life, this new birth...of being reborn as 'food of grace' for others.

WOW!!! What a powerful image: being reborn as 'food of grace' for others.

You know, I think there might even be Christian ritual, a sacrament as it were, built around that idea. But we will get to that in a little bit. I've still got a couple more minutes to fill.

What a powerful image, being reborn as 'food of grace' for others.

And now I begin to think about all of those who have been 'food of grace' to me in my life. And caught me up in God's net of grace. Incredible pastors and mentors whose bottom line was grace towards me, from my days as an awkward teen, to days of struggling with life and family issues as an adult.

Family members and friends all along the way who didn't count the cost of having me in their life...but were there for me and as grace to me instead.

Co-workers as well. I once had a secretary who was pure grace...from the moment I walked into the office in the morning, because she was always there before me, to the moment I left for the day, because she was always there after me. She was pure grace. And every day in that office was a day caught up in God's net of grace. Now the fact that she tripled my 'net income' while working for me... well, that was pure grace...vy. But she was pure grace.

Oh, and also my present-day co-workers, especially my boss Eric, I think it's probably in my bottom-line interest to mention him as well. You see, I still haven't totally died to the bottom-line idea of 'net income' or 'net benefit to me'. That is one death that is still gasping for breath on God's fishing boat of grace.

So many people to be thankful for – pastors, family, friends, co-workers. So many people who have let me taste grace in their dealings with me.

And I begin to wonder. What kind of food am I for people? Do I leave them with a bitter taste in their mouth after being around me? Or have they tasted grace? I'm not always sure. But here is what I am sure of... If I am going to catch others up in God's net of grace...it is only because I have been caught up in God's net of grace...and I am continually being caught up in it.

And if I am going to be reborn as 'food of grace' for others...it is only because I am continually being fed the grace of God here in this meal. Because here in this meal I encounter the one who became 'food of grace' for others in his death.

“Take and eat...Take and drink...my body and blood given and shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.”

And my gasping breaths in this new birth...are filled with the air of grace.

Amen.

## **Spirit in the Desert**

### **Opening Songs**

#### **Be Still**

Be Still, know that I am God

#### **You Lord Are In This Place**

You Lord are in 1)...this place.  
2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.  
Your presence fills it.  
Your presence is peace.

### **Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

### **Touchpoint**

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

#### **Dwell Among Us**

Keep moving and living and breathing in us  
Keeping working and singing and speaking through us  
You dwell among us...  
With all this life I long to see, more of You and less of me  
Lord send Your spirit here to work in us

### **The Meal**

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Benediction**

#### **Let Your Servant**

Let your servant now go in peace, O Lord  
Now go in peace according to your word