

Pastor's Ponderings

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by

Davey L. Lefler

“Pocket Fish”

(A 21st Century Parable)

¹⁶One day as Jesus was walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother, Andrew, fishing with a net, for they were commercial fishermen. ¹⁷Jesus called out to them, "Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ¹⁸And they left their nets at once and went with him. Mark 1:16 - 18 (NLT)

My friend Matt and I went fishing late last spring. Matt was being a good buddy and wanted to show me a great place to fish, so he took me to Birch Creek. Matt drove. He paid for the gas and he even brought some soft drinks and snacks to enjoy on the ride. When we got to Birch Creek, I thought I was in real trouble because you need waders to fish that creek properly and I didn't have any. Matt even thought of that. He had chest waders for himself and brought hip waders for me to use. Size fourteen hip waders!!! I wear size 9 or 9 ½ shoes and boots.

“But, hey! You wanna catch some fish don't you?” was Matt's only reply. I trudged down to the creek in those giant sized waders and waded out into the water. I was forced to go slow because of the swiftness of the water and the bigness of the boots. I didn't feel very comfortable in size fourteens to say the least.

Then I caught a fish on my fly rod. It was the first Idaho brook trout I had ever caught on fly gear. I assure you, I forgot all about the size of those boots. I was overwhelmed with pride and joy as I reeled that fish into my hand. I gently took him off the hook, held him high in the air for my friend Matt to see, and shouted to the world, “I caught a brookie!!!” Matt was proud of me and gave me an enthusiastic “crew chief thumbs up.”

As I was preparing to go after my next catch, I wondered what I should do with the one I had already caught. I didn't have one of those fly fisherman creel thingies, so I stuck the fish in my blue jeans jacket pocket. After a short while and a few “strikes” later, Matt hollers from upstream to me, “Hey, Dave what did you do with that fish you caught?”

“I stuck him in my pocket,” I hollered back, as I continued to cast my line.

“What?!?” “You don't stick brookies in your pocket,” he retorted in a rather flabbergasted way. “That's no way to treat an Idaho Brook Trout. You either put him in a creel to keep him as fresh as long as you can, or you put him on a stringer for the world to see!!!” Matt then made me a very fine looking willow branch stringer.

I still have pictures of that day and that first Idaho Brookie. Trust me, it was not a big fish. But it was my first with strange gear in a strange place.

Obviously, I still have fond memories of that day with my friend Matt. We fished, we talked, we shared food and drink, we laughed, we teased each other, and we talked about God. Because of that time we spent together we grew closer to each other. And we grew closer to God.

I honestly believe that is exactly what Jesus wants us to do when He talks about “fishing for people.” Jesus wants us to do the everyday things we do, with the everyday people we have in our lives in a way that brings others closer to Him.

My friend Matt is already saved and so am I, so our time together wasn't about converting someone. And the time Jesus spent with the disciples after they made the decision to follow Him wasn't about conversion either. It was about growing closer to one another and closer to God.

Who do you know who needs to be closer to God? Go fishing for people. It won't always be comfortable. Sometimes it will seem things just don't fit right. Some places will feel very strange. But there will be great joy in the going and the fishing.

Just don't stick any fish in your pockets!!!