

At the amen, the owner said, "Hey - you didn't tell me you were a preacher. What kind of church do you preach at?"

Campolo thought a moment, cocked his head sideways, and then answered with a grin, "*I preach at the kind of church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at three-thirty in the morning!*"

What happened next was the most poignant moment of all. The man squinted at Campolo and announced, "*No ... no, you don't. There is no church like that. I would join a church like that.*"

See friends, the trouble with us fishing in deep waters is, there's no telling who or what will get gathered in by the net. And that's good news. For it gives you and me a place in the kingdom.

It is also what gives you and me a place at the table, where because of Jesus, a taste of bread and wine is considered a feast.

**Amen!! Thanks be to God!!**



## *A Message from Mark!* **Calling You & Me**

**7 February 2010 - Epiphany 5**  
**Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 5:1-11**

An elderly man stopped at a Hearing Aid shop and asked about prices. "*We have them from \$2,500 down to \$1.50,*" the salesperson said. "*What's the \$2,500 one like?*" "*Well, it automatically translates into five languages and has the latest in wireless micro-electronics.*" "*And what about the one for \$1.50?*" "*It's this button attached to a string,*" the salesperson said. "*How does it work?*" "*It doesn't. But if you put the button in your ear and the string in your pocket, you'll be surprised how loud people will talk.*" Today's readings have to do with listening carefully and responding to the call of God.

I like fishing. It takes me back to happy memories of my Brisbane boyhood when I'd catch the Shorncliffe train from home on Saturdays and fish off the end of the pier. Perhaps it connects with the 'hunter, gatherer' in me. Some years ago Jan and I were holidaying on the NSW coast at Ulladulla. I talked my way onto a 70' fishing trawler and the skipper agreed that I could come on their next trip.

We went 20 miles out, well off the shallow continental shelf into the deepest water that I had ever been fishing in. Electronic positioning instruments located us at a tried and proven fishing ground. There we put out the huge net while slowly steering in a very large figure of eight.

Without a word some hours later, the leading deck hand fired up the winch and began hauling up the huge net. The team of three crew worked swiftly to remove the stray fish caught in the neck rather than the bowl of the net. When I got the hang of it, they let me help, pointing to which bin the different fish belonged.

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*Enquiries about the Christian faith are always welcome.*

The skipper spoke only to have a laugh about my fish-feeding over the side, in spite of the calm seas. I quickly learned the strange quiet ways of deep sea fisherman. Since we were out in such deep water, we were catching things in the net I had never before seen. I remember the thrashing of an angry shark on the deck, but even more I remember how one of the guys moved quickly to rid the net of some huge rays, taking care so that no one would get spiked by their poisonous spines. We caught about two tones of the target fish: Orange Roughy, but amongst them there were Flathead, Schnapper, John Dory, Tailor, Trevally, Benito, Leatherjackets and even a few Flounder that magical night.

When we finally came home forty hours later, the water at the harbour entrance was full of phosphorescence. There were more stars in the sky than I have seen before or since. I'd say my perception of the universe changed. That trip will remain in my memory as one of my truly perfect fishing expeditions. By going deeper into the sea with a master, one who knew the water and his tools like the back of his hand, I saw unimaginable things of nature and a few secrets of life itself.

Jesus told Simon to put out in deep water and let his nets down for a catch. And what he pulled up was full of the secrets of life itself. And though Simon surely knew the value of working with his hands, he left it - just like that - to follow Jesus that day. ***"From now on, you'll be catching people,"*** Jesus had said.

Of course the trouble with fishing in deep water is that you cannot see the bottom, so what gets into your net is always somewhat surprising. The trouble with catching people is that you can never be completely certain in just what part of the ocean they have been swimming.

Tony Campolo, the author and evangelist, tells about being invited to speak in Honolulu and having trouble getting his body to adjust to the time shift from his home in Philadelphia. He found himself wide-awake at three o'clock in the morning drinking coffee in an all-night diner. Presently the door opened, and in came about eight women laughing and talking loudly.

Campolo soon deduced that they were streetwalkers finished with their evening's work and relaxing before going home to sleep. One, named Agnes, mentioned to her friend that the next day would be her thirtieth birthday.

After the group left, Campolo got a bright idea. He said to the gruff proprietor behind the counter, ***"Did you hear that one woman say tomorrow was her birthday! Whaddya say we throw her a party! I'll come back tomorrow night with some decorations, and let's surprise her with a cake and everything!"*** The man's wife came out of the kitchen. Both of them said, ***"That is a wonderful idea. Let's do it."***

Twenty-four hours later the little diner was decorated with streamers and balloons. A festive sign was taped to the window. The couple had put the word out on the street, and a large assortment of night people were gathered. When the prostitutes came in for their usual coffee, the shout went up: ***"Happy birthday, Agnes!"***

The woman stood speechless as the singing began. Tears started to roll down her cheeks. Nobody had showed her genuine kindness in years. The owner brought out a birthday cake with candles. Agnes was in such shock that she had to be reminded to blow them out. She paused again. ***"Well, cut the cake, Agnes!"*** the proprietor said. She finally found words. In a whisper she said, ***"Please... I just... I just want to keep the cake. I'll take it to my apartment down the street ... just for a couple of days. Please let me keep the cake."***

No one knew how to respond, but no one could think of a reason to refuse her request. So out the door she fled, holding the cake as if it were the Holy Grail.

An awkward silence filled the room. Campolo finally broke in with another bold suggestion: ***"I have another idea - why don't we pray!"*** Without hesitation he began to voice a prayer for Agnes, that God would bless her on her birthday, that God would bring peace into her life and save her from all that troubled her...