# Hooked

**Week One:** The Kingdom Net

**Big Idea** - The Kingdom of God is like a fishing net set to collect as many souls as possible. The concern is not with the kind of people “caught” in the divine fishing net, rather, the concern is just for the net to be filled. We are to join God in spreading the Kingdom net by sharing the good news of Jesus. Our job is not to offer the Kingdom only to people we see as worthy. Our job is to offer it to as many as possible and let God deal with sorting it all out in the end.

**Prayer** - “Gracious Father, give us the wisdom and courage to partner with you in spreading the Kingdom Net as far and wide as possible. Help us to become unconcerned with *who* is in the net and deeply concerned with *how many* are gathered.”

**Scripture** - Matthew 13:47-50, John 3:16, Revelation 7:9

### Introduction

Today we begin a 3-week series called *Hooked.* And because I know some of you are wondering, it’s NOT a series about pirates. However, it is a series about fishing, fisherman, nets, and the wide open (metaphorical) sea.

In Jesus’ time fishing was a very common and important activity. In fact, many of the original disciples were fishermen, many of Jesus’ parables involve fishing, and the area around the sea of Galilee was where Jesus did the majority of His earthly ministry.

Fishing was an integral piece of New Testament life, and learning to become “fishers of men” was an integral piece of New Testament discipleship.

And unless you’ve never been fishing before or never seen a Bass fishing tournament on ESPN you know that fishing requires:

* Patience
* Skill
* Mental and physical strength
* A willingness to get your hands dirty
* The right tools

Actually, now that I’ve said all this out loud, it seems like fishing sounds a lot like ministry. Maybe that’s why Jesus made the connection in the gospels. Maybe that’s why the metaphors and parables still hold so much value for us today, even though we’re thousands of miles and hundreds of years apart from the original disciples and their communities.

So what’s so special about fishing? And why would we spend the next three weeks talking about nets, fishermen, and the sea?

The short answer is, *because Jesus did.*

### Main Teaching/Body

Before we get too far ahead of ourselves we need to talk about the *kind* of fishing we’re referring to in this series which is the *kind* of fishing Jesus was referring to in the gospels.

Specifically, we’re talking about net fishing as opposed to line fishing. And net fishing is, as you’d imagine, the practice of throwing a large net into the water either from the shore or from a boat and scooping up as many fish as possible in the net as you pull it up. This is generally speaking, the practice referred to in our main passage for the day from Matthew 13:47-48;

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

**Like a Net**

Jesus says, “The kingdom of heaven is like a net.” And when He says this He’s referring to the type of net I just described. But to be even more specific, in this passage he uses the word, *sagene,* which describes a large drag net. This type of net was “dragged” over the bottom of the sea with the ends of the net drawn in together, trapping everything inside. Once full, the net would be pulled to shore, or on board the fishing boat.

In this example, the kingdom of heaven is like a drag-net in that the kingdom is spread wide and lowered over the earth.

**Thrown Into the Sea**

Some versions of our passage say, “let down into the lake,” and other versions say, “cast (or thrown) into the sea.” Either way, the point is still the same.

Instead of using a singular line or spear to catch fish, which would be more precise, the net was simply thrown or lowered into the water. Obviously there was some amount of precision in the practice. The fisherman knew where the “good spots” were and they generally endeavored to throw their nets in these directions, but the idea is that the net would engulf anything in its path.

The sea, or lake, depending on your translation represents the earth and probably more precisely, humanity. You know the saying, there are other fish in the sea, well it’s kind of like that metaphor. The body of water is representative of all the people in the world… and this is important.

It would be different if Jesus said something like, “The kingdom of heaven is like a fisherman who cast his line in the lake looking for the perfect rainbow trout.” And while on the one hand Jesus was very intentional with individual people all throughout the New Testament, we also know, *“God so loved the WORLD that He gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* (John 3:16)

Jesus isn’t looking for the perfect rainbow trout.

God sent Jesus to redeem the whole world.

The Father lowered the gospel net of salvation over the sea and the net is gathering up anything and everything in its path.

**Gather Fish of Every Kind**

One of the reasons I believe this parable is so amazing is that in describing the kingdom like a drag-net, we come to understand the net indiscriminately gathers up anything and everything. In the sea or ocean this means you’d have all kinds of species in your net from fish to crustaceans to coral to literally anything else traveling through the water.

This picture gives us incredible insight into how the kingdom, like the net, gathers all kinds of people up in it. In fact we know from the book of Revelation that John saw a glimpse of the end times community of believers. He said;

*“After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”* Revelation 7:9

An uncountable multitude.

Every nation, tribe, people, and language.

All standing before the throne, ready to worship.

This is an absolutely beautiful picture of the kind of multi-ethnic end times community we can expect to be a part of as believers. The kingdom, like a drag-net, is gathering up all kinds of people. The righteous, the unrighteous, and everyone in between… and eventually it all has to get sorted out.

**Seperated in the End**

If you’ve ever watched one of those deep sea fishing shows or the reality series about crab fisherman, you know there’s always this scene when they haul in their nets and they have to sort out what they’re going to keep from what they’re going to throw back.

Or maybe you hate fishing and you have no idea what I’m talking about… If that’s you, I bet you have a junk drawer at your house. And I bet there comes a time every 5-7 years where you empty out all the contents of the junk drawer and you begin to put things into piles of “keep” or “throw-away.”

Well, whether you’re into fishing or you have one of these “catch-all” drawers in your house, the lesson Jesus wants us to learn is the same. And simply put it is; there will come a time in history when the contents of the kingdom net need to be sorted out. Jesus elaborates on this further down in Matthew chapter 13. He says:

*“So will it be at the end of the age: The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous, and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* (Matthew 13:49-50)

What Jesus describes is a harsh reality for those who don’t believe. But it’s also a wake up call to those of us who do believe; we still have time.

As long as we’re all in the net together, we still have time to share the gospel with those around us. We still have time to pray and seek salvation in our families, neighbors, co-workers, strangers we meet at the coffee shop, etc…

But, there will come a time when the final trumpet blasts, and the end of the age comes, when there won’t be any time left. When this happens it will be time for sorting, and that job is up to God - the Chief fisherman - the divine creator of the cosmos.

### Conclusion

At the beginning of our sermon I said that fishing requires:

* Patience
* Skill
* Mental and physical strength
* A willingness to get your hands dirty
* The right tools

And now, as we wrap our first week together in the *Hooked* series, I want to double down on this statement. In part because now you know we’re all in this kingdom net together, for an undisclosed amount of time. We’re all going to need a lot of patience, skill, mental and physical strength, willingness to get our hands dirty, and the right tools.

Our job, as ambassadors of Christ, is to join God in spreading the kingdom net by sharing the good news of Jesus.

Our job is not to only offer the kingdom to people we see as worthy.

Our job is to offer it to as many as possible and let God deal with sorting it all out in the end.

Because that’s His job.

And we know that He’ll be faithful and do His part.

But the question today is, *will we do our part?*

So this coming week I want you to be thinking about how you can share the good news with others… How can you participate in spreading the kingdom net?

Where do you need to exercise more patience?

How can you grow your skills in sharing with others?

Pray and ask God to increase your mental and physical ability.

Humble yourself, and get your hands dirty in serving others.

And if you need to spend a little extra money to get some better tools for the journey, I’d encourage you to do so.

Let’s have a great week, let’s do our part in spreading the kingdom net. Let’s pray together.