Our scripture this morning comes from Matthew 13:47-50. While you’re finding that, A man decided to try skydiving. The instructor was telling the class that the main chute should be deployed at 500 feet. If that didn't work be sure to open the backup chute by 400 feet. One student asked "If neither chute works, how long before you land?" The instructor replied, "The rest of your life."

**Matthew 13:47-50 47“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”**

The funny this morning talked about a skydiver. How long will a man have after the second chute fails to deploy before he hits the ground? We laugh at the instructors answer – the rest of your life. How long will a person who fails to accept Christ have to meditate upon their fate? The rest of their eternal life – not short like a parachute fall – eternal separation from the love of God.

We’re back in the parables this morning. Two weeks ago, we heard about a field. The man unintentionally found a treasure. Last week, we heard about a pearl. The man went seeking and found the treasure. This week, Jesus is talking about a dragnet. Verse 47 **47“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,** Jesus didn’t say – the kingdom of heaven is like a fishing pole, or a casting net… He says it’s like a dragnet. The dragnet, in Jesus time, would be fastened to the shore or fastened to an anchored boat while a second boat dragged the 7’ tall by up to 300’ long net in a semi-circle. The net indiscriminately captures fish of all kind.

The dragnet is the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. We’re not to pick and choose who we think is ready for the Gospel. We’re to drop the dragnet of the Gospel out and draw all. We’re to drop the dragnet where we might catch those of different skin color, different nationality, different political beliefs, different economic status. We’re not to be fishing rod fishers of men… we are to be dragnet fishers of men. We can’t only fish in the pond out back, but we must drop the dragnet into the sea… Habakkuk 1 talks about the Chaldeans gathering all nations in their dragnet. Jesus in Matthew 4:19 makes us Fishers of Men. The sea is the world.The fish are souls.

The Greek word Sunago is used here – to gather, but it’s interesting that the same word is used in Matthew 25 when Jesus says I was a stranger and you welcomed me – Sunago means to welcome. So the dragnet that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ is gathering… welcoming fish of all kinds. The Gospel does not discriminate and neither must we! We must welcome all.

The first part of Verse 48 **48which, when it was full, they drew to shore;** the net has been drawn around and drawn to shore. There is a time for fishing and a time to sort. The window of opportunity will close. The Gospel has been cast into the world and there will come a moment when the net is drawn to shore. The shore represents an end to the world – Job 38, God tells Job that He placed boundaries around the sea and that it could come no further. Recall that in Matthew 22:10, that the servants went out into the highways and gathered all they found, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled. The net here is filled!

The Gospel welcomes all to the church. Each soul heard the gospel and was captured and drawn to become a part of the church. The Greek word used here is Anabibazo (anna-by-buh-zo) – it means to draw upward, to lift upward. It is the same word used in Acts 24:15 to refer to **resurrection** - I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust.

The time for fishing is over, the time for sorting has begun. **and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.**What determines a good fish and a bad fish? Is it the look in their little beady eyes? Do they have a certain look on their face? No – the word used for bad here is sapros. It’s a Greek word that means rotten or corrupted. It’s the very same word used in Luke 6:43 when Jesus refers to the bad trees that produce bad fruit… rotten fruit. It has the idea of fruit that once was good and now is bad. It’s was made bad not by nature, but by corruption. The fish, when it arrived in the net of the Gospel, was a good fish, but the fish became bad by a corrupting influence. Something infiltrated the fish and changed it.

Remember the parable of the seed. Not all the seed produced fruit. Some come into the kingdom of God, drawn to the church, they respond to the word of God. But then something happens. They don’t persevere. They choose another way. Gradually, they turn away from their faith. Their love for God grows cold. They eventually wander from the way of truth. They become ‘bad’. Something infects their soul and they turn away.

Verse 49 **49So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just.** At the end, the angels will be the ones gathering the souls and separating the wicked from the just. The fishing will be over. All things hidden will be revealed. All things done in the dark will be brought into the light. There will be people from all walks of life. Some will not make it… the state of their heart is what God will measure. He won’t look works or robes or bank accounts. He won’t look at what you meant to do. He won’t look at what you intended to do. He will look upon the heart. The just will live forever with Him.

Verse 50 **50and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”** The wicked will be cast into the furnace of fire, just as Jesus talked about with the tares in the parable of the wheat and the tares. The wicked will be cast into an eternal fire where they will have the rest of their eternal life to understand.

It’s up to each of us. We’re called to be fishers of men. We’re not called to decide when to haul it to shore, that’s God. We’re not called to judge the catch, that’s the angels. It is our job to drop to dragnet and keep the boat moving. It’s our job to stay focused on spreading the net. I ask you today – where are you spreading the net? How wide are you casting the net? Are you fishing with a fishing pole – picking a choosing where you’ll fish? I urge you drop the pole, cast the net. Bring God the fish… let God clean them and sort them out.