

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2026
SERMON: "INTERRUPTED ROUTINES"
REV. IRENE WILLIS HASSAN
SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 4:12-23

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12 When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13 Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali— 14 to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

15 "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—

16 the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned."

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him.

21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

Sermon: Interrupted Routines

It's commonly understood among people who have read this passage before that when Jesus says to "fish for people," He means to make disciples—people who follow Him into hope, transformation, and new life. This is something He commands not only His first disciples at the start of His ministry, but also all of us at the end of Matthew in Chapter 28, known as the "Great Commission."

So let's start there: in this chapter, Jesus is asking the fishermen to follow Him—and then to help others follow Him, too. Seems simple enough, right? Jesus was a great guy! The very best guy, in fact! I've rarely, if ever, heard anyone say they didn't like Jesus, whether they were Christian or not. Objectively, He was pretty awesome, so it shouldn't have been that hard to get people enthusiastic about following Him.

Yet as we know intimately, it is actually quite hard.

In 2026, nearly everyone has heard of Jesus. Yet the number of people who actively follow Him in the Western world is rapidly decreasing. Scholars (because, you know, I love data) often attribute this to prosperity and stability: in countries where life is relatively comfortable, people can rely on their moral compass and find religion less compelling. Without hardship, faith can feel optional, irrelevant, or even boring.

That theory might be true—but when you actually ask people why they don't follow Jesus, many don't say, "I don't like Him." They say, "I don't trust His followers." Mahatma Gandhi, who deeply admired Jesus' principles, famously said, *"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."*

This is exactly why "fishing for people" is tricky: Jesus' followers have historically been... well, messy. Sometimes well-meaning, sometimes harmful. Judgment, shame, manipulation, exclusion, control—these are hidden spikes in our nets that people have attributed to Christians. The successes of great Christians like Martin Luther King Jr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, or Henry Opukahaia are often lost in the sea of memory over evil ones like Jim Jones, or the church's complicity in the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy, or more closely to most people's minds, the local pastors or church folks that people have personally experienced to be domineering or manipulative. With this sort of perceived legacy, people understandably hesitate to step in.

So how do we fish effectively when the nets appear dangerous?

A simple answer might be: “Just be nice.” But even atheists can be nice. Corporations can be nice. Customer service bots can be nice. Niceness alone is not uniquely Christian. Jesus does not say, “*Follow me, and I will make you pleasant people*” or even “*Follow me, and you’ll be persuasive.*” He says, “*Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.*”

So let’s look at how Jesus did that, then, if it’s not just about being pleasant or persuasive.

Jesus approached some fishermen. The fishermen were middle class guys, who were closing up shop after a long night of work. They probably weren’t thinking about their spiritual health or mortal soul; they were thinking about the fresh bread sitting on the table at home and the comfort of their beds. They were likely on autopilot, completing their same daily routine. Yet, Jesus simply walks up to them and tells them to forget the bread, forget their family, forget their routines, and follow Him.

And they do. Immediately.

Why? That seems like a weird choice.

Jesus opened His ministry by preaching “Repent! The Kingdom of Heaven is near.” He began by saying that the routines of our lives are about to be severely disrupted.

It’s super hard to disrupt routine. People thrive on their routines and knowing what’s going to happen to them at any given moment; it gives us a sense of control and safety. The fishermen were in the deepest part of their daily routine – work, and then the transition from cleaning up work to go home – and Jesus purposely interrupted that sense of control and safety for them in order to invite them into something larger.

So this is how Jesus started His evangelism – calling average, middle class people out of their routines and inviting them into something larger. You may feel frustrated thinking about that because if evangelism wasn’t hard enough due to the cultural climate, pulling people out of their routines is *super* hard!

Yet, when we know there’s a higher purpose at play, we do it, don’t we? People leave their routines all the time when they sense there’s something greater out there.

People quit stable jobs to start nonprofits, not because it is easier, but because it matters. Parents lose sleep, money, and predictability the moment a child is born, not because it is convenient, but because love reorders everything. Young adults join the military, knowing that it’s often intense, unstable work that could possibly result in their death, because they know that military service is a higher calling. None of these choices are about persuasion or niceness. They are about purpose.

This is what Jesus does with the fishermen. He does not flatter them, guilt them, scare them, or manipulate them. He does not offer them an easy life or a polished sales pitch. He simply interrupts their routine and invites them into something larger than themselves. And somehow, they recognize that what He is offering is worth the risk.

That is where the church often gets evangelism wrong. We think the task is to convince people, or to behave well enough that no one feels offended, or to deploy clever strategies that make faith more appealing. But the gospel has never spread through gimmicks, pressure, or religious performance. And it has never spread through niceness alone.

The best evangelism is an invitation. An invitation out of small, repetitive, self-protective routines and into a life shaped by meaning, sacrifice, hope, and love. An invitation to be part of something that actually matters. When people see Christians who are willing to disrupt their own comfort for the sake of others, who live with integrity, curiosity, and courage, who ask real questions and care about real lives, trust begins to grow.

In following Jesus, lives are reordered. Priorities shift. Routines loosen their grip. And people begin to sense that there is more to life than safety and predictability. Fishing for people is not about catching anyone. It is about standing at the edge of the water and saying, honestly and humbly, Come and see. There is something bigger than this. And it is worth leaving the nets behind.

Discuss:

When have you willingly disrupted your routine because something felt more important or meaningful?