

The Fishing Parable

The village chiefs were at a loss to know what to do. The island that they had lived on for centuries was no longer capable of providing the food they needed to survive and they needed to find an answer.

The three villages which they represented had come from the same ancestors, and at heart they had the same belief system and way of life. In many ways they were the same but at the same time they lived separately because the law said that each village had the freedom to interpret and implement the island way of life.

As the chief's sat in silence trying to work out a solution to their problem, a voice said "why don't you fish?" A young girl had been listening and she had finally worked up the courage to speak. 'Well we are on an island' she said, 'aren't there plenty of fish in the sea to feed us?'

A short while later and everything was agreed. Each village was located on a different side of the island and the chiefs agreed that they could each fish off their own coast.

The Tabit tribe were boat builders and they wasted no time in paddling their boats out to sea. After some time they began to feel tired but as they looked down, they could see some fish and so they decided to make the best of it and to fish there. It was agreed that each of them would take it in turns to try to dive in the water in order to grab a fish and that when the boat was full of fish they would return home. It didn't take long for them to see that their task was going to be next to impossible, they learnt that fish were slippery and also that they really needed to go further out to sea to reach more fish. They were out as far as they could paddle so they kept trying where they were and several hours later though they returned home with no fish.

The Stibs tribe used rope for everything and they wasted no time in throwing their rope nets into the sea. There was a great deal of excitement as the people stood on the shore waiting for the huge catch of fish that would feed them. Several hours later, their nets were empty apart from several plastic bottles.

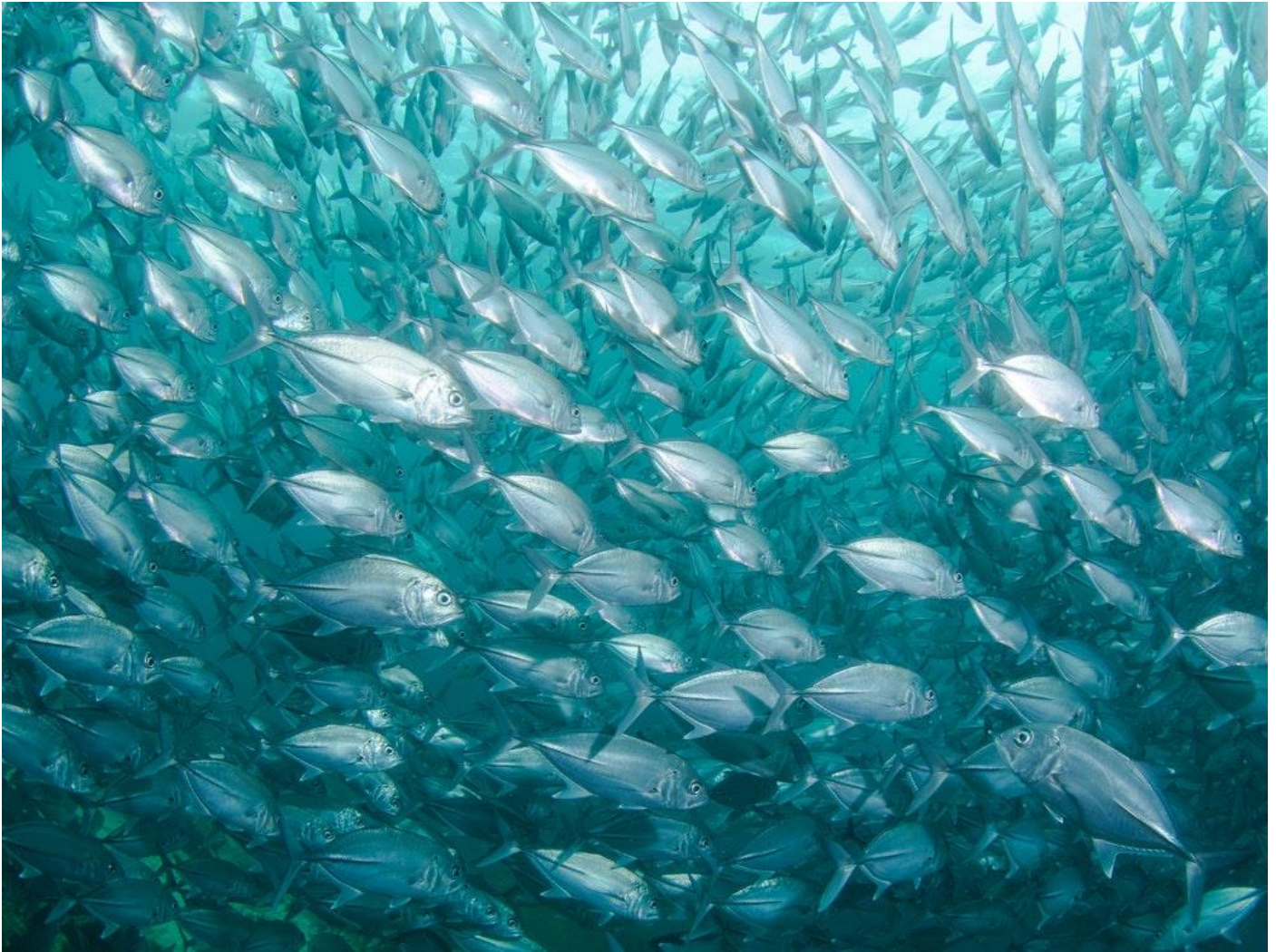
The Pastit tribe were just discouraged. They had huge sections of canvas that they used to create shade for themselves and instinctively they knew these could help but they couldn't work out how. They tried to fashion the canvas into canoes which definitely didn't go well and so in the end they cunningly wrote 'fish welcome here' on one of the sheets of canvas and they attached it to a wooden mast near the water so that the fish could see it. They hid nearby waiting for the fish to swim in to their trap but several hours later none had. At least they were entertained as they waited by the way that the wind caught the canvas making it billow.

The next day, the Chief's went to find the young girl to complain. As they each explained their approach and how it had failed the girl said to them "you are very silly aren't you!" She could see that she had made them angry and so she quickly said 'you have everything you need to catch fish, you just need to work together'.

How does this parable end? With cooperation that has boats with sails that can get far enough out to sea and then nets to catch the plentiful fish or with villages that get smaller and smaller and eventually die?

To consider:

- What could we accomplish more effectively if we worked together as churches?
Are there things that the church which you are a part of dreams of doing but you lack the resources?
Have you shared those dreams with your neighbouring churches to see if God is calling you to work together? What strengths and resources do you have that you could share with other churches?
- What are the barriers that stop us working together and how can we overcome them?
- How would it change our thinking if we focused more on the Biblical truth that there is only one body of Christ?
- In this parable, the young girl saw possibilities that others didn't. Would becoming more like children help or hinder us in cooperating and becoming more interdependent instead of independent?



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