

Westside Kids' Adventures

Prologue:

In our last episode, the Westside Kids found themselves in a foreign land in the distant past on the shore of a large lake. If Willow was right, it appeared to be about the time of Christ. The wise, old man who had briefly appeared to them told them the mysterious book that brought them to this time and place was a gift from Fisher's great, great grandfather, nicknamed Papa Jim, who served as a missionary in the Amazon jungle many years ago.

As the sun was setting, a local boy signaled to the Westside Kids to follow him. But to where? Was it safe? We rejoin the Westside Kids as they try to decide what they should do next.

Episode 1: Catching Fish and Catching Men (Luke 5:3-10)

Scratching his head, as if it would help him think more clearly, Fish said, "I don't think we have much choice but to follow this boy. Otherwise, we'll just be wandering around here hoping somebody will take pity on us and offer us a free place to stay with free food. That doesn't seem too likely, especially at this time of night."

"And with the clothes we're wearing, it won't be long before people start asking questions, and they won't believe our answers," said Abby. "Somehow we need to get some clothes that help us to fit in better with these people."

Joey nodded in agreement. "We need to take a chance and see if this boy can help us with those things."

"Sounds good to me, especially if he can get us some food. I'm starving," said Max.

"Look, the boy is starting to walk away," said Willow. "We better go after him."

The five Westside Kids set off at a trot to catch up to the local boy hoping he, or perhaps his family, would be able to help them without expecting payment.

After walking a short distance along the shoreline, they entered the fringe of a small town with dozens of small stone and mortar homes. The boy led the Westside Kids to a wooden shed behind one of those homes. He put his forefinger up to his lips, signaling them to enter quietly.

Speaking in a whisper, the boy said, "My name is Adriel. The old man you were speaking to earlier asked me to find a place for you to stay. I'm afraid this is the best I

can do for now. You can sleep here tonight. There are some light blankets on the bench behind you, but you may not need them – the nights stay pretty warm at this time of year. My father is a fisherman and he gets up very early, so he's already asleep. I have to tell my father about you when he wakes up in the morning, but I'm sure he'll understand and want to help you. I'll bring you some breakfast in the morning, but you can drink from our well tonight if you're thirsty, and there are some oranges in that basket in the corner."

The Westside Kids introduced themselves and thanked Adriel for his kindness and generosity. Then Fish asked him the name of the large lake they had just left.

"You really must be lost if you don't even know you were on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee," said Adriel.

"Galilee," repeated Willow, "You mean we're in the land of Israel?"

"Yes, though most people call it Palestine," said Adriel. It's all under Roman rule, of course. The Jewish people want the Roman army to leave, but I don't think that's going to happen anytime soon."

"Bummer," said Max.

"The old man also told me you are followers of Jesus and his teachings. So is my family. I think you would be interested to know that he is expected to be coming here tomorrow," said Adriel.

"Jesus will be here tomorrow?" cried Abby, as if she couldn't believe her ears. "That's fantastic!" All the kids expressed their excitement at this news.

"Jesus is the only thing people are talking about," said Adriel. "He's been performing miracles and healing many people between here and Capernaum. He has also been preaching in the synagogues. I expect there will be a big crowd following him here."

"That is so cool," said Joey.

"You have strange expressions. You must come from very far away indeed. Where would that be, if I may ask?"

The kids struggled to provide a truthful response. "Oh, uh" Abby hesitated, "I guess you'd say we're gentiles from Kitsilano."

"Kitsilano, you say?"

"Yeah, well it's, umm, a pretty new place, I guess you'd say," said Max haltingly. "Probably not on your latest maps yet."

"Hmm, okay," said Adriel looking rather confused. "Well anyway, you can all come with me tomorrow, but first I will have to see what I can find to replace your strange clothing. It will be a big day tomorrow, so I suggest you get some sleep."

"Thanks, Adriel," said Fish and Abby at the same time. They all bid Adriel a good night and thanked him again for his kindness.

The Westside Kids made the best of the blankets and some straw scattered on the floor to create a rather uncomfortable sleeping surface, but they were so exhausted from the events of the day that sleep came easily.

As if they had set an alarm clock, a rooster crowed at the crack of dawn and the Westside Kids began to stir. It took a few more crows from the noisy neighbourhood rooster, not to mention the heavenly aroma of fresh baked unleavened bread wafting toward the shed, to motivate the kids to rise from their slumber. Along with the delicious bread, their host brought some broiled fish and local fruits.

But it was not Adriel delivering breakfast; it was his father, Eliab. He was a tall, handsome man dressed in a clean white robe, which was not his usual fishing attire. He was dressed to see Jesus. He entered the shed wearing a broad welcoming smile, which put the kids instantly at ease.

"I am Eliab. You are welcome guests in my home. I have brought you some clothes you can change into. Adriel tells me you are from far away – a place I have never heard of, but it doesn't matter. A follower of Jesus is like family to us."

"We can't thank you enough," said Abby. "We aren't quite sure how long we'll be here until we go back to our parents, but we'll try not to be too much of a burden for you."

"After your meal, Adriel and I will take you to the shoreline where we expect Jesus will be teaching today. It will be a large gathering. He already has many local followers who accept his teachings, and then there are others who just want to see who this miracle worker is and what all the excitement is about."

"We can hardly wait ourselves," said Joey.

"You should be aware, however, that you may also see some Pharisees or Sadducees who want to discredit Jesus, and they try to intimidate his followers. I've even heard that in Nazareth, his enemies tried to grab Jesus and throw him down a cliff, but he passed right

through them, and he left that city. Following Jesus in these times requires a strong commitment to resist the threats and accusations of those who oppose him.”

“We promise to be real careful and keep Fisher out of trouble,” said Max. The others laughed.

Eliab and Adriel went back inside their home while the kids consumed their breakfast with great speed and questionable manners. After breakfast, the kids decided to have another look at the book that brought them here.

Fish and Willow were seated on the ground near each other with the journal in between them resting on its pouch. They found that as long as all five of them didn’t touch it at the same time it no longer produced electrical jolts, or spinning, or the other things they had experienced the day before.

Fish flipped open the journal and turned to page two. “Look at this, you guys. On this page, Papa Jim drew a picture of some men in a wooden boat throwing out a fishing net.”

“He also drew a bunch of people who look like they’re swimming in the water around the boat,” said Joey.

“Yes,” said Willow, “and he wrote down the scripture from Luke 5:10:

Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching men.”

“Do you think that has some special significance for us?” asked Max.

“The old man said this book was a *gift* – that we’d need to rely on it in the days to come,” said Willow.

“So if it does have a special meaning for us, I guess we’ll find out soon,” said Abby.

“Here come Adriel and his dad. I guess it’s time to go and see Jesus!” said Joey excitedly.

Eliab and Adriel led the Westside Kids back to the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee where the kids had started out the evening before. They were still some distance away from their destination when they spotted a large and growing throng of people congregating along the shore.

“With that crowd, how will we ever get close enough to Jesus to hear him speak?” asked Joey.

“I have an idea,” said Eliab. “I left my boat down by the water after fishing yesterday. We can all fit in it. We can row close to where Jesus is and hopefully hear him from near the water’s edge.”

“Great idea,” shouted Fish. “Let’s go!”

They hurried to Eliab’s boat, pushed it into the water and were soon rowing up to where the crowd of people were pressing in around Jesus to hear him teach the word of God.

“Look, there he is! Surrounded by people – that’s actually Jesus,” said Max, barely able to contain himself. “Can’t we get any closer?”

“I don’t think we’ll have to,” said Abby. “Look, he’s pointing to two boats at the edge of the lake, but the fishermen have gone out of them to wash their nets.”

“Now he’s getting into one of those boats,” observed Fish.

“Yes, I know that boat,” said Eliab. “That’s Simon Peter’s boat.”

“We’re so close to them now I can hear them talking,” said Fish. “Jesus has just asked Simon to put out from the shore. They’ll be practically right beside us. This is so exciting.”

Once the boat was a short distance out in the water, Jesus sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “**Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.**”

And the kids could hear Simon answering, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”

“Come on kids,” said Eliab. “Let’s row out after them and see what happens.”

Peter and his partners did as Jesus asked and rowed farther out into deep water and let down their nets. And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

And then Jesus said to Simon, “**Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.**”

Willow called out to the other kids, “Did you hear what Jesus just said? That’s the scripture we read in the journal this morning: it was talking about what we just saw with our own eyes!”

While Eliab rowed his boat back to shore, the kids and Adriel watched as Simon Peter, James and John left their boats and fishing nets on the beach and followed Jesus to become fishers of men.

Back at the shed, the Westside Kids sat together and Willow led them in a prayer. She thanked the Lord for enabling them to witness one of Jesus’ many miracles and seeing how it influenced Peter, James and John to leave everything behind in order to follow Jesus as his disciples. And she prayed that each one of the kids could apply this to their own lives.

When Willow had finished praying, Max said, “Wow, that was an incredible experience, but what do we do now?”

“Remember the old man told us it may be some time before we return home,” said Joey.

“Yes, and he also said we’d have more adventures, more to learn, and we’d have to rely on our faith,” said Abby.

“I don’t know what the next step is or where we’re supposed to go next, but maybe we should do what we did last time and gather around the book,” said Fish.

“Sounds good to me, unless someone has a better idea,” said Abby.

It seemed to be the best idea they could come up with, so once again they placed the old journal between the five of them and hoped for the best.

“Okay,” said Fish. “Like before, I’ll count to three and we all grab on. One … Two … Three!

The five kids grabbed onto the book with their eyes tightly shut expecting sparks, electrical jolts, spinning and mayhem. But nothing happened. When they opened their eyes, they were stunned to see another person sitting right in front of them and they all jumped back in surprise.

“Homesick already,” said the old man.

“Oh, it’s you again,” said Fish.

“Can you please stop doing that – suddenly appearing. It freaks me out,” said Willow.

“I think it’s a bit weird, but if I could quietly slip in and out like you, I’d probably play tricks on people, too,” said Max.

“My purpose is not to play tricks, Maxwell. I’ve come to see if you’ve learned anything from your experience today. It is one thing to see or even read about one of Jesus’ miracles, but it is a better thing to learn from it and use it profitably in your own life.”

Joey spoke up first, “I think we learned a lot. Jesus filled Peter’s net with fish even though Peter said he had caught nothing during all the night before. It showed me that Jesus has control over all the fish in the sea.”

“That’s right, Joseph,” said the old man. “Psalms 8:6-8 says God not only has control over the fish of the sea but also over all living things because he created them all. It reads:

*You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”*

“And also,” said Abby, “I think Jesus used that miracle to show Peter, as well as James and John, who he is, and that even greater miracles would occur if they put their faith in him.”

“So, by their decision to leave everything behind and make the commitment to follow Jesus, he made them fishers of men. I think that means they would help to bring more people to Jesus.” added Willow.

“Yes, very good,” said the old man. “I want each of you to continue to think about these things. Apply them to your own lives so that you are not just hearers of the word of God, but also doers. So when God calls upon you to serve him, think about what you learned here today.

“And now, once again, I will leave you for a time.”

“But wait! What do we do now?” asked Max. “Do we have to live in this shed for the rest of our lives? Our parents will think we were kidnapped. What about that?”

“Heavens, you ask a lot of questions, Maxwell Calhoun. But to put you at ease: when you held onto the book a few moments ago, you didn’t know it but you moved ahead a little in time. In fact, your next adventure will begin tomorrow. And when your adventures are over and you finally return home, you will find that very little time will have passed. Let’s just say, your parents won’t have missed you.”

“So, Abby and Willow, you can still go to the mall when we get home!” joked Fish.

Everyone laughed and the old man left them again to reappear at a later time.

The Westside Kids just completed one adventure and another one is coming up right behind it. If you thought today’s adventure was exciting, wait until you see what God does next! Tune in tomorrow to find out.