

“What Just Happened?”

Luke 5:4-11

January 1, 2017

REFLECT: Happy New Year & Welcome to 2017

- Let's talk resolutions, revelations, revolutions
- Let's talk about going from dead to alive!
- Then, let's talk about going from alive to living

LET'S PRAY

T/S: Let's look back before we focus forward...

The Word of God	2012
The Work of God	2013
The Walk of God	2014
Defining & Defending the Church	2015
Birthing & Building the Church	2015-16
Blueprint for Church Leadership	2016

Now... 2017

The Blueprint for Christian Discipleship (applied leadership)

INTRO: Explain the 2017 Series & “Journey”

- Sermon Series: Miraculous Metamorphosis

VIDEO: *DisciplesPath INTRODUCTION*

- **DisciplesPath – The Journey**
 - Preaching & teaching discipleship
 - LIFE Group discipleship
 - Personal discipleship **(P-B-T)**
 - Weekly/Daily “DisciplesPath”
 - Koinonia relationships
 - Prayer
 - Topical Bible study
 - Teaching biblical Devotionals
 - Daily Bible reading (Path/**Chrono**)
 - Obedient actions/attitudes
 - Worship expressed holistically
 - Koinonia Relationships
- **Our Missional Goals:**
 - Glorify God by growing more glorifiers
 - Invade, Invite, Invest:
 - ***Informing Inspecting Inspiring!***

T/S: While discipleship begins before salvation (with prayer & evangelism), our journey is going to begin at the point of salvation & walk through sanctification for the balance of 2017!

Lesson #1

“What Just Happened?”

Luke 5:1-11

TIMELESS TRUTH:

*You were created by a passionate God
who relentlessly pursued you...
to bring you into His family.*

PREVIEW: Parable in a Miracle — (three stages)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. <i>The Word of God</i> | MESSAGE (of the miracle) |
| B. <i>The Work of God</i> | MESSIAH (applied miracle) |
| C. <i>The Worship of God</i> | MISSION (for the Messiah) |

STORY / SERMON TEXT: [Luke 5:1-11](#)

A. Context:

Luke's Jesus was a solitary, traveling preacher/teacher

In [John 1:41](#) Andrew told Peter he found the Messiah.

In [Mark 1:21-39](#) Peter, Andrew, James & John with Him

In [Luke 4:38-40](#) Jesus healed Peter's mother in-law...

NOTE: **Jesus had been with them... 3X prior**

B. Content: Uncover & Unpack the Story (Lk. 5:1-11)

The WORD of God

(Truth in Love)

¹ On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on Jesus to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret,

First things first!

See GRACE! *On one occasion:*

Occasions only come because Christ came! - JDP

Christ comes to us! He left heaven to come to humanity

1. Genesis 3:15 - the **Promise**
2. Isaiah 9:6 - the **Procedure**
3. Matthew 1:18 - the **Person**
4. John 1:1 - the **Power**
5. Hebrews 12:2 - the **Purpose**
 - a. **Serve** - Romans 5:8
 - b. **Sacrifice** - 1 John 4:9-10
 - c. **Seek & Save** - Luke 19:10

"Jesus divinely disrupted and reversed the story of humanity. On the cross, our guilt, the bondage of sin, and our separation from God were reconciled."

To hear the word of God — "His preaching in the synagogues... people followed Him to the shore to hear Him"

2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

Washing their nets — As if their day's work was over.

3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, (a.k.a. Peter) Jesus asked him to put out a little from the land. And Jesus sat down and taught the people from the boat.

Put/thrust out a little from the land — Peter is first asked to lend his boat for the preaching of the word. For the first time the instruments of his ordinary life are turned to the use of his new calling: his boat, his oars, his strength and his skill. **What a lesson is here for every disciple, to be ready to give his ALL... to further the preaching of the word!**

Jesus sat down = normal posture for a teacher

"Every pulpit is a fishing boat." -Dr. J. Vernon McGee

The crowd proves open ears & shut hearts often go together...

NOTE: God's Word is BOTH instructive & authoritative!

A Sure Guide to Heaven / Alarm to the Unconverted

Puritan Pastor: Joseph Alleine

Qt: It is one thing to have sin alarmed by convictions, and another to have it crucified by converting grace. Many, because they have been troubled in conscience for their sins, think well of their case, miserably mistaking conviction for conversion.

Conversion does not morph out of moralism... and its not a “reward” for conforming to religious rules.

Qt: There is an eternal difference between being civilized and being sanctified.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Test yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; examine yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?

“I am not baiting my hook with rhetoric, nor fishing for your applause, but for your souls. My work is not to please you... but to save you.”

T/S: In a short time, Peter would have to exercise faith, and Jesus was preparing him. *If Peter had not obeyed the first seemingly insignificant command, he would never have participated in the miracle that followed.*

The WORK of God

(mMm)

4 And when Jesus had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

It was a well-known fact that, in the Sea of Galilee, you caught fish at night in the shallow water, not in the daytime in the deep water.

***“Launch out into the deep.”** — The faith of Simon Peter is now tested... the boats had been drawn up on the shore, and the nets were being cleaned and dried. The fisherman is now told to launch out into the deep, and cast the nets again. Simon's knowledge of his craft, of the habits of fish, of the weather, etc., would have led him to refuse; but his deference to Christ and reverence for Him disposed Him to obey.*

5 And Simon answered, “Master, we worked all night and took in nothing! But at your word... I will... let down the nets.”

The key was his faith in the Word of God!

Peter was willing to submit to the authority of Jesus, even though he did not understand all that the Lord was doing. And remember, a great crowd was watching from the shore. — Warren Weirsbe

"Nevertheless."— reflects two feelings:
(1) weariness; (2) discouragement.

Life as a whole is one great "nevertheless."

⁶ And when they had done this (a.k.a. "obeyed"), they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

The miracle demonstrates **all-knowing & all-powerful**

Never mind how vain the night's work has been, nor how weary their arms from rowing and hauling nets; if Jesus says, "Down with the nets," then down they should go, and he who truly calls Christ Master will not stop to argue or debate... Swiftly is part of obedience.

The miracle is remarkable, **no needs... ALL GRACE!**

*7 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. **8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."***

See Biblical BELIEF

- *"Peter fell down at Jesus' knees..."*
- **Jesus is Lord!**
- Until Jesus is your Lord, He's not your Savior

Depart from me — **The Divine power "over-awed him"**
(a cry of "agonized humility")

See REPENTANCE

We must relent, repent, believe & obey!

- i. **Repent** – 1st preached words of Jesus/Peter
- ii. **Repent** – not a bad word... turn to get LIFE!
- iii. **Repent** – Luke 15:11-24 the prodigal repents
- iv. **Repent** – leads to a loving "homecoming"

Seeing our own sinfulness, in direct contrast to Christ's divine holiness, prepares our personal pathway to an eternal turning-point. - JDP

To know ourselves sinful and Christ as Lord is the beginning of deliverance from sin and of fitness for apostleship.

NOTE: Miraculous GRACE comes in all different packages; but ALL must be opened with faith and repentance!

- Prayed for grace by another (Elisha)
- Disinterested interruption of grace (Paul)
- Early childhood grace (John the Baptist)
- Salvation grace thru proclamation (Pentecost)
- Grace through difficult discipline (Titus)
- Grace delivered thru pain & persecution:
 - O.T. Prophets
 - N.T. disciples:
 - Stephen
 - Paul
 - Peter
 - JESUS!

⁹ For Peter and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,

Astonished — **"amazement possessed him."**

"If you weren't amazed, you weren't saved!" - JDP

10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you WILL BE catching men."

See again the PARABLE in the MIRACLE...

*The fishermen represent Christ-followers,
the boat is the biblical Church,
the net is the gospel & the sea is the world...*

Peter learnt from this miracle that it was best to trust Christ. This miracle may have done much towards accustoming Peter to look to the Lord's prompting, and to be ready at His word to give up that about which he felt most sure.

The thought of this miracle must have come back to Peter at... Pentecost, when "*there were added to them in that day about three thousand souls!*" — **Latham.**

See the miracle... personally applied...

Fish became FISHERS!

Dead fish became loving fishers of Men!

“Fishing with nets has *no hooks* & NO BAIT!
The Gospel’s net calls for and catches with
obedience vs. bait!” - JDP

The WORSHIP of God

11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

- a. Worship-filled *want-to, walk & work*
- b. Right-hearted, biblical Obedience
- c. No matter what!

Peter and the other fishermen left everything and followed Jesus. This absolute, total commitment is the essence of true discipleship
- **HCSB Study Bible.**

God has two requirements for coming to him. Like Peter, we must recognize our own sinfulness. Then, like these fishermen, we must realize that we can't save ourselves and that we need help. If we know that Jesus is the only one who can help us, we will be ready to leave everything and follow him.
- **Life Application Study Bible.**

“If and when you treasure Christ above ALL else... you will SURRENDER all that is BELOW Him.” -JDP

REVIEW: *“What Just Happened?”* (Luke 5:1-11)

Parable in a Miracle —	(mMm)	
A. <i>The Word of God</i>	MESSAGE	(of the miracle)
B. <i>The Work of God</i>	MESSIAH	(applied miracle)
C. <i>The Worship of God</i>	MISSION	(for the Messiah)

TIMELESS TRUTH:

You were created by a passionate God who relentlessly pursued you... to bring you into His family.

Christ guides those who follow Him. - JDP

CLOSE: MEMORY VERSE: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

LET'S PRAY

VIDEO: “Rescue”

Luke 5:4-11 (ESV)

⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."

⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.

⁷ 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.

⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,

¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Study Notes:

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary

Luk . *To hear the word of God.*— "His preaching in the synagogues had excited so much attention that the people followed Him to the shore of the lake to hear Him" (Speaker's Commentary). Lake of Gennesaret.— St. Luke alone uses the name.

Luk . *Standing.*—The technical word used for vessels at anchor or fastened to the shore.

Washing their nets.—**As if their work for the day were over.**

Luk . *Launch out.*—**The verb is in the singular; addressed to Peter**, who was steersman of his boat: "*let down*" is in the **plural; addressed to all the fishermen in the boat.**

Luk . *Master.*—Not "teacher": a title of respect. All the night.—The usual time for fishing (cf. Joh 21:3).

Luk . *Their net brake.*—Rather, "was breaking" (R.V.), was on the point of breaking.

Luk . *Depart from me.*—Lit. "Go forth away from me," i.e. "Go out of the boat and leave me." The presence of one possessed of Divine power or

knowledge overawed him: he felt, too, that in Jesus there was also a Divine holiness; and he was overwhelmed with the thought of his own unworthiness. Yet he addresses Jesus as "Lord," a term of greater reverence than "Master" (Luk 5:5). His request that Jesus should leave him is the expression of a very different feeling from that of the sordid Gadarenes, who desired Him to depart from their coasts (Luk 8:37).

A sinful man.—It is his own individual guiltiness that he confesses, and not simply the depravity of human nature: the word he uses implies this—it is ἀνὴρ, and not ἄνθρωπος.

Astonished.—Lit. "amazement possessed him."

"thou shalt be catching"—as a permanent occupation.

"It must be remembered that this was the second call of Peter and the three apostles—the call to apostleship: they had

already received a call to faith. They had received their first call on the banks of the Jordan, and had heard the witness of John, and had witnessed the miracle of Cana. They had only returned to their ordinary avocations until the time came for Christ's full and active ministry" (Farrar).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.

Parable in a Miracle — (three stages)

- D.** The sermon from the fishing-boat
- E.** The draught of fishes
- F.** The call of Simon.

I. The sermon from the fishing-boat.—The narrative is vivid and picturesque. We can fancy the little crowd on the beach in the fresh morning; their unmannerly jostling; the singular inattention of Simon and the others; the wet, slimy boats drawn up, in token that fishing was done for the day; the crews busy cleaning the nets; and stretching from the strip of busy beach the glittering waters, shining in the early sun as it rose over the eastern hills. **Though the fishermen had not lifted their heads from washing the nets to listen to Jesus, they were**

all His disciples; but they had not been summoned to forsake their callings, and Jesus had been going about preaching alone. They did not know how far He wished them to swell the crowd of listeners, and so they went on with their work. **The patient doing of common duties is as true a service as any other.** Who looked likeliest disciples—the eager listeners, or the knot of fishers?

The light-minded crowd shows us that open ears and shut hearts often go together, and the true sign of discipleship was dropping the nets and pushing off just because He wished it. Let us learn to stick to our small secular duties till Jesus asks other service, and then to drop them immediately and cheerily, like these men.

What a pulpit for such a preacher the rough, untidy fishing-boat was!

How willingly He shared the lowly lot of His friends, and how little He cared for comfort, or what people call dignity! The gospel for all men, poor as well as rich, was fitly preached from a fishing-boat; and its power to exalt all secular work into Divine and priestly service was plain from the very place of its utterance.

II. The draught of fishes.— *"At Thy word I will"* is **the very essence of obedience**. Never mind though use and wont say "Folly";

Never mind how vain the night's work has been, nor how weary the arms with rowing and hauling; if Jesus says, "Down with the nets," then down they should go, and he who truly calls Him Master will not stop to argue or remonstrate. Swiftmess is part of obedience.

The reward is as swift. The load threatens to break the nets. **The miracle is remarkable, in that it was not**

done in answer to any cry of distress, and in that it had not for its purpose the supply of any sore need. Its value is didactic and symbolical. In the former aspect it reveals

Jesus as the Lord of nature, and as fulfilling the ancient psalm, which ascribes to man dominion over "the fish of the sea."

The incident shows how the original and forfeited glory of humanity was restored in Jesus.

"We see not yet all things put under" man, but "we see Jesus."

This teaching is equally clear whether we regard the point of the miracle as being our Lord's supernatural knowledge of these passers "through the paths of the seas," or as His sovereign power bringing them to the nets.

It teaches, too, His care for His followers' material needs, and prophesies the blessing which crowns obedient work in secular callings.

If we are sure of what is duty, we are to stick to it, come failure or success. Then, too, we learn the need for prompt, unhesitating obedience to every command of Christ's, however it may break in on our rest or contradict our notions.

If all our common duties have this motto written on them, "At Thy word," the distasteful will become pleasant and fatigue light, and success and failure will be wisely alternated by Him as may be best for us; and whatever the outward issues of our work, its effects on ourselves will be to bring us nearer to Him; and though our nets may often be empty, our hearts will be full of perfect peace.

III. The call of Simon.—The miracle heightened Peter's conception of the Worker, for **"Lord" is a loftier form of address than "Master."** It had also flashed upon him a sudden consciousness of his own sinfulness, which was altogether wholesome. It is well when great mercies reveal the Giver more clearly, and when the glimpse of the gracious Giver bows us with the sense of our own

unworthiness.

To know ourselves sinful and Christ as Lord is the beginning of deliverance from sin and of fitness for apostleship.

But Peter was sadly wrong in his "Depart from me." The disease is a reason for the coming, not for the going, of the Healer.

He would have understood himself and His Lord better if he had cried, "Never leave me, for I am sinful."

NOTE:

He did understand matters better when, on the occasion of the second miraculous draught of fishes, he flung himself into the water to get close to his Master.

A partial sense of sin and surface knowledge of Jesus drive from Him: a deeper understanding of ourselves and of Him drives to Him. Christ knows what Peter means by his foolish

cry. What he wants to get rid of is, not Jesus, but the sin that separates him from Jesus. "Go away," said Peter.

"Come to Me henceforth permanently, and leave all else to be with Me," replied Jesus. **Christ knows our hearts better than we do, and often reads our wishes more truly than we put them into utterance.**

"From henceforth" indicates the change in Peter's calling and relation to Jesus. The moment was an epoch, making a revolution in his life. Our sight of our own sinfulness and of His holiness ever makes a turning-point.

Well for us if "henceforth" we are nearer Him, and lifted above our old selves.

The fisherman's trade is the symbol of evangelistic activity, and the points of resemblance are very obvious.

- A. There is need for the same patient toil,
- B. The same persistent bearing up against discouragement.
- C. There will come the same apparent want of success, and
- D. There should ever sound in the servant's ears

the Master's command to launch out into the deep—to push boldly into untried ground, and to ply his task, undaunted by discouragements and unwearied by the long night of toil.

E. The conditions of success are:

- a. Diligence,
- b. Obedience,
- c. Hope.
- d. Leave all
- e. Follow Him.

We may have little, or we may have much; but whatever it be, we have to give it up; and he who surrenders an "all" which is little is one in motive, and will be one in reward, with him who gives up an all which is much. —Maclaren.

SUGGESTIVE COMMENTS

First Studies in Christ's College.

- I. Thrust out a little from the land.—Peter is first asked to lend his boat for the preaching of the word. For the first time the

instruments of his ordinary life are turned to the use of his new calling: his boat, his oars, his strength and skill. What a lesson is here for every disciple—to be ready to give his house, his field, his shop, his seat at the receipt of custom, not to any mere selfish purpose, but to further the preaching of the word! For thus disciples are first taught to thrust out a little, in a venture to which they are new and timid.

II. Launch out into the deep. — That first lesson is followed by a second, and all the more suggestive that their life-long skill now finds a Master. For themselves **they have toiled all night in vain; but they learn to begin anew at His word, and they are astonished at their success.** How often would this scene and its teaching come up to memory in aftertimes, with other lights and other applications! How often would Peter think in other waters of his partners in the ship, of fellowship in work as well as faith, of the joy of drawing men to the shore when the Master watches and directs, and of the wonder of nets unbroken under the heavy strain!—MacColl.

III. Trust in Christ taught by the Miracle.—

Peter learnt from this miracle that it was best to trust Christ. He might say to himself, "I never felt more convinced that we should take nothing by letting down the nets than I did on that morning on the lake; but I let them down, and found I was wrong." A memorable act is not done with educationally when it is over. The recollection of it is an attendant monitor, always pointing the same way; and so **this miracle may have done much towards accustoming Peter to look to the Lord's prompting, and to be ready at His word to give up that about which he felt most sure.—Latham.**

IV. A Miracle of Instruction.—The early miracles were mostly wrought in the sight of the multitude; but **this miracle of the draught of fishes was performed when few but the disciples were by. It was a miracle of instruction: it lent great impressiveness to great lessons, it emphasised in a way never to be forgotten the call to become "fishers of men," and it gave good augury of success. The thought of this draught must have come back to Peter at many a juncture in his life—a notable one being the morrow of the feast of Pentecost, when "there were added to them in that day about three thousand souls!"—Ibid.**

V. Christ the Ruler of our Lives. — **In this**

incident Christ unfolds Himself to His disciples as Lord of their lives and of their lives mission.

VI. He shows that their mission will be among men whom they are to seek to win; He gives them a glimpse of a kingdom which is moral rather than material; and at the same time He shows Himself as Lord of their lives.—
Boyd Carpenter.

I. The scene.—Here you have **week day ministry, open-air preaching**, a quite extempore service, an occasional and entirely singular pulpit.

II. The sign.—The deed which followed when He had "left speaking" is a good illustration of the mutual influence of every-day religion and every-day work.

III. The purpose and effects.—A general impression of astonishment, a spiritual crisis in Peter's case, and a complete and immediate decision on his part and on that of the other fisher-apostles. The crowning purpose of the miracle was to be a sign and seal of the calling of these converts as preachers of the gospel,

messengers of the kingdom, fishers of men.

IV. The symbolic meaning. — It was an acted parable. The analogies between the work of fishers and the work of Christ's servants are many.—Laidlaw.

"The people pressed upon Him"

The presence of a large crowd of men and women eager to hear the word of God lends additional significance to the spiritual meaning of the miracle now wrought, and to the call now addressed to these fishermen to leave their trade and become fellow-workers with Christ in the task of saving men. The multitude gathered together upon the beach were ready and waiting to be enclosed in the gospel net.

"Were washing their nets." — It is interesting to notice how often in the Gospels Christ is

revealed to men while they are busy in their worldly occupations, and how those very occupations are made the means of giving them truer knowledge of Him and of their relations to Him.

- A. **The shepherds** at Bethlehem, while tending their flocks, receive tidings of the birth of Him who was to be the Good Shepherd.
- B. **The Magi**, while engaged in watching the heavens, see the star that guides them to Christ, who was Himself the Star which was to arise out of Jacob
- C. **The fishermen** of the Galilæan lake, Simon and Andrew, James and John, while engaged in their trade, are called to join Him and to become fishers of men. The figure of Christ as a fisherman was common in the early literature of the Church: it is based upon this passage and upon the parable in Mat . Various refinements upon the figure were current, e.g. the mystical symbol of the ἰχθύς (i.e. an acrostic upon Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour), the idea of the soul, like the fish, being born in the water (of baptism), etc.

"Entered into one of the ships." — "Behold the Fisherman upon the sea and the fish upon the land."

"Launch out into the deep." — The faith of Simon Peter is now tested. The night-fishing had been utterly

unsuccessful, and the idea of renewing the attempt that day had been abandoned: the boats had been drawn up on the shore, and the nets were being cleaned and dried. The fisherman is now told to launch out into the deep, and cast the nets again. Simon's knowledge of his craft, of the habits of fish, of the weather, etc., would have led him to refuse; but his deference to Christ and reverence for Him disposed Him to obey.

To labour at the command of Christ, and to do so with alacrity and pains, is proof of a docile and implicit faith.

Simon's obedience was perhaps not very severely tested by this command, but it must be remembered that his faith in Christ was as yet only in an early stage of development, and therefore more easily shaken: he now manifested deference to a Teacher, where afterwards he showed ardent obedience to a Lord and Saviour.

"Nevertheless."—Two feelings predominant in Peter's words:

- (1) weariness;
- (2) discouragement.

"Nevertheless." Here is the correction of the two feelings. "This or that is against it, yet **it shall be done.**"

- I. Life as a whole is one great "nevertheless."
- II. Each act of the life is a little "nevertheless."—A "though" and a "yet" in perpetual conflict, the "though," being the plausible thing, and the tempting thing, and the half-truth; the "yet" less apparent, but the manly thing, and the courageous and the right. There is a "though" as well as a "yet" in the simplest action. Though it is pleasant to sit still, I must be up and doing. It is irksome to perform this particular duty, but it must be done.—Vaughan.

Failure a Proof of Want of Faith.—Every failure is a proof of the want of faith. If faith were present, failure could not be. But there is such a thing as faith, after defeat, returning to the charge; and it is in that returning to the charge that the test of our Christianity lies.—Ibid.

***"At Thy bidding."*—This is the disciple's "nevertheless," and finds its place in the disciple's daily duty and service. And by the faithful use of it the disciple is trained and prepared to meet other and higher demands.**

Humbly recognizing past failure, and feeling the full weight of the disappointment, not ignoring the pressure of difficulty and the sting of pain, yet **trusting in His grace, we set against the stream of indifference and**

unbelief the whole force of our will consecrated to Him, and say, "Nevertheless, at Thy bidding we will let down the net."—Nicoll.

"A great multitude of fishes."—It seems unnecessary to inquire minutely whether this miracle was due to **Christ's omniscience or to His omnipotence**, i.e. whether by supernatural knowledge He was aware of the near presence of a shoal of fish, or whether by His Divine power He brought together a multitude of the fish of the lake. Perhaps the former supposition would commend itself to most of us; but in favour of the latter we have the passage in **Psa 8:8**, in which the ideal son of man, who finds his true representative in Christ, is described as having supreme authority, not only over cattle and beasts of the earth, but over the fish and all creatures that live in the sea. In either case the miracle was equally stupendous.

"Beckoned." — Perhaps because of the distance they were away from the land, or because fishing operations are best carried on in silence. **The noise of shouting might only drive the fish to struggle to escape, and add to the risk of losing them by their breaking through the nets.**

The Miracle a Parable. — With this miracle we may compare the second of the kind wrought after the Resurrection, and also the parable in Mat . We shall do well to keep in mind that these miracles were also parables and

prophecies: everything connected with them is symbolical.

The fishermen represent apostles and ministers of Christ, the ship is the Church, the net is the gospel, the sea is the world, and the shore is eternity. One part of the figure is inappropriate: the fish die when drawn out of the water, while the souls of men are taken captive to be introduced to a higher life. Perhaps this latter idea is conveyed in the words of Christ (Luk 5:10), "Catch men," lit. "take alive men," i.e. catch them for life eternal, instead of catching fish for death.

"Depart ... for I am ... sinful."

I. An important fact.—

- a. **Peter saw himself a very sinful creature.**
- b. **When we stand near Jesus, we see ourselves:**
 - i. **Without moral beauty.** Sin has taken away

our comeliness.

- ii. **Without moral purity.** Sin has robbed us of our integrity.
- iii. **Without moral utility.** Our usefulness has gone.
- iv. **Without moral prospect.** The future is dark.

II. A mistaken impression.—

- a. *"Depart from me"*: no, because there is something there besides sin. The Saviour beheld the man and the apostle there.
- b. *"Depart from me"*: no, because there is a great service to be rendered. Peter became a fisherman to catch men.
 - i. "Depart from me": no, for nearer Thee we have more light, more holiness.
 - ii. The Repulsion and Attraction of Christ.—
"Depart from me": "To whom shall we go?" (Joh). The speaker of both texts is the same; the person addressed is the same. Yet the one utterance is the direct negation of the other. Whence comes this paradox?
 - iii. **It is a paradox inherent in the religious life. This contrast of repulsion and attraction is the true attitude of the devout spirit towards God. Side by side they have their place in the heart—the awe which repels, the love which attracts. We thrust God away, and yet we run after Him.—Lightfoot.**

Peter's First Impulse. —

An oppressive sense of sin had come over Peter in a moment. The eyes of God were looking from that heavenly face down into the depths of his heart. This wrung from him the cry of fear. So must it ever be when we come face to face with God.

Observe Peter's first impulse when he realises how sinful he is. "Depart from me." The desire is to get away from God. **Many do not like to think about God. But for Him to depart would be to leave the sinner helpless and hopeless. What we need is not less but more of Him.** What was Peter's final impulse? To "forsake all, and follow Him." — **Gibson.**

Mixed Elements of Character. — This exclamation opens a window into the inner man of Peter through which we can see his spiritual state.

There is in him that characteristic mixture of good and evil of which we have so many reappearances. Among the good elements are reverential awe in presence of Divine power, tenderness of conscience, and unfeigned self-humiliation—all valuable features of character, but not existing without alloy. Along with them were

associated superstitious dread of the supernatural, and a slavish fear of God, showing how unfit, as yet,

Peter is to be an apostle of a gospel which magnifies the grace of God even to the chief of sinners. — Bruce.

Self-humiliation. — With the self-humiliation of Simon Peter compare the confession of Isaiah and that of St. Paul (1Ti 1:15).

Note, also, **how utterly inappropriate his words would have been, if Christ had been a mere man**—even the holiest of men. They express a self-loathing which is excited only by the contemplation of infinite holiness, and by the thought of the near presence of God.

"Depart from me."—The exclamation of St. Peter was wrung from a heart touched with a sense of humility, and his words did not express his thoughts. They were **the cry of agonised humility**, and only emphasised his own utter unworthiness. They were in reality the reverse of the deliberate and calculated request of the swine-feeding Gadarenes. The dead and profane soul tries to get rid of the presence of the Divine. **The soul awakened only to**

conviction of sin is terrified. The soul that has found God is conscious of utter unworthiness, but fear is lost in love (1Jn). — **Farrar.**

A Strong Plea for Christ to remain. — Simon doth not greedily fall upon so unexpected and profitable a booty, but he turns his eyes from the draught to himself, from the act to the Author, acknowledging vileness in the one, in the other majesty: "Go from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." It had been a pity the honest fisher should have been taken at his word. **O Simon, thy Saviour is come into thine own ship to call thee, to call others by thee, unto blessedness; and dost thou say, "Lord, go from me"? as if the patient should say to the physician, "Depart from me, for I am sick." But it was the voice of astonishment, not of dislike—the voice of humility, not of discontentment;** yea, because thou art a sinful man, therefore hath thy Saviour need to come to thee, to stay with thee; and because thou art humble in the acknowledgment of thy sinfulness, therefore Christ delights to abide with thee, and will call thee to abide with Him. No man ever fared the worse for abasing himself to his God. **Christ hath left many a soul for froward and unkind usage; never any for the disparagement of itself, and entreaties of humility.**

Simon could not devise how to hold Christ faster than by thus suing Him to be gone, than by thus pleading his unworthiness. — **Hall.**

The Deepest Thing in Man's Heart.—At moments like these all that is merely conventional is swept away, and **the deep heart utters itself, and the deepest things that are there come forth to the light.** And the deepest thing in man's heart under the law is this sense of God's holiness as something bringing death and destruction to the unholy creature. Below this is the utterly profane state, in which there is no contradiction felt between the holy and the unholy, between God and the sinner. Above it is the state of grace; in which all the contradiction is felt, God is still a consuming fire, yet not any more for the sinner, but only for the sin. It is still felt—felt far more strongly than ever—how profound a gulf separates between sinful man and a holy God; but felt no less that this gulf has been bridged over, that the two can meet, that in One who shares with both they have already met.—Trench.

A Strange Prayer & a Wonderful Answer.

- I. The prayer is a strange one, when we think by whom and to whom it was offered. This is a familiar gospel story. The prayer sounds like that of the Gadarene demoniacs; but no two cases could be more dissimilar. **This prayer is wrung from a human soul by the sudden revelation of a Divine presence, of which it feels itself unworthy.** Very strange must this prayer have looked to Peter in

the retrospect—this prayer for separation from the Saviour, and that because he is a sinner. **Here is a conversion of the converted, and that not the last or most memorable conversion. There will always be in heroic souls an experience, or many such, analogous to this of Peter. For lack of it we are ineffective, trifling, confident, wavering, unimpressive.** Oh for the grace of reverence!

II. **The answer.** — **Jesus does not blame the fear which He comforts.** He first calms and then transfigures it. "There is a more excellent way; there is a Divine remedy for the fear that would shrink from Me: I will give thee work to do for Me." **Two words are prominent in the commission.**

- a. **"Men."** Great stress is laid upon it. **The object of the ministerial work is men, not "souls" merely, but "men."**
- b. 2. The other word, **"catch,"** speaks of a living capture, of a taking alive in the great net of the gospel. It might be said of some evangelists that they are satisfied to catch a piece of the man, and to catch that piece itself dead! How unlike this to the gospel of St. Peter! How is it that men, even religious men, must always dismember, never unite, the compound being to which they address themselves? There are those who despair of a gospel to the whole man. Not so Jesus Christ.—Vaughan.

"Thou shalt catch men." *Those that were wandering, restless and at random, through the deep, unquiet waters of the world, the smaller falling a prey to the greater, and all with the weary sense of a vast prison, he shall embrace within the safe folds and recesses of the same gospel net, which if they break not through, nor leap over, they shall at length be drawn up to shore, out of the dark, gloomy waters into the bright, clear light of day, so that they may be gathered into vessels for eternal life (Mat 13:48).—Trench.*

The Fisherman and the Shepherd. —

The figure here used does not set forth the whole work of the Christian minister, but only two aspects of successful work He may accomplish, viz. that of securing within the net, and that of landing safely upon the shore.

These are the first and last stages in the salvation of the soul. The intermediate stages are those in which the soul is ministered to, and fed, and encouraged, and guarded from harm; and these are represented under the figure of a shepherd caring for sheep. Hence the two figures mutually supplement one

another, and show us the offices of a Christian minister as an evangelist and pastor respectively.

Other thoughts in connection with these two figures are suggested by Jeremy Taylor: "In the days of the patriarchs, the governors of the Lord's people were called shepherds. In the days of the gospel they are shepherds still, but with the addition of a new appellative, for now they are called fishers. Both of the callings were honest, humble, and laborious, watchful and full of trouble; but now that both the titles are conjunct, we may observe the symbol of an implicit and folded duty. **There is much simplicity and care in the shepherd's trade; there is much craft and labour in the fisher's;** and a prelate is to be both full of piety to his flock, careful of their welfare, and also to be discreet and wary, observant of advantages, laying such baits for the people as may entice them into the nets of Jesus' discipline."

The Significance of the Miracle. — The physical miracle was to be superseded by miracles of a higher kind, inasmuch as success in the spiritual labours of apostles is a greater proof of Divine power than mighty works that appeal to the bodily senses. The miraculous draught of men which Peter was at a later time to secure (Act) was more wonderful than the miracle

now wrought. **The purpose of the miracle seems to have been to deepen and strengthen the faith of those whom Christ now called to engage in spiritual labours, to secure obedience to that call, and to give intimation of splendid success in pursuing that higher work.**

Observe that Jesus calls these men to have more than faith, to give up their secular employment and to engage in work of a sacred kind. As they are not yet appointed to be apostles, their status is very similar to that of the Christian minister. — Godet.

The Training of the Apostles. — "Christ selected rough mechanics—persons not only destitute of learning, but inferior in capacity—that He might train, or rather renew, them by the power of His Spirit, so as to excel all the wise men of the world" - Calvin.

No one need imagine that want of learning and ability are not drawbacks in the case of those who wish to become Christian ministers. Only a gross and ignorant fanaticism could foster such an idea.

*These fishermen were not called to teach,
but to be trained to teach.*

What they learned from the example and teaching of Christ, from knowledge of human character and society as they went up and down the country with Him, prepared them for their great work.

The various kinds of training our theological students are exercised in, are the best and most efficient substitutes which can be found for the methods employed in the case of the apostles.

***"Forsook all."* — They returned again to their occupation as fishermen after the Crucifixion, and were again called to abandon it and devote themselves to spiritual labours by a second miraculous draught of fishes and by the direct precept of Jesus.**

After Pentecost they never resumed their former secular calling.

Probably in their going back to it we have an indication of their belief that with the death of Jesus all the hopes they

had cherished were overthrown, and His call to them to become fishers of men nullified.

The example of Simon Peter suggests the duties of
(1) prompt obedience to Jesus,
(2) self-distrust,
(3) and complete devotion to Him
("leaving all to follow Him").

"Thou hast the art on't, Peter, and canst tell
To cast thy net on all occasions well.
When Christ calls, and thy nets would have thee stay,
To cast them well's to cast them quite away" (Crashaw).

- Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary

BE Commentary:

This event is **NOT parallel to the one described in **Matthew 4:18-22** and **Mark 1:16-20**.**

In those accounts, Peter and Andrew were busy fishing, but in this account they had fished all night and caught nothing and were washing their nets.

(If nets are not washed and stretched out to dry, they rot and break.)

Jesus had enlisted Peter, Andrew, James, and John earlier, and they had traveled with Him in Capernaum and Galilee ([Mark 1:21-39](#)), but then they went back to their trade. Now He would call them to a life of full-time discipleship.

It is possible that at least seven of the disciples were fishermen ([John 21:1-3](#)). Consider the fact that **fishermen generally have the qualities that make for success in serving the Lord. It takes courage and daring, patience and determination to work on the seas; and it also takes a great deal of faith. Fishermen must be willing to work together (they used nets, not hooks) and help one another.**

They must develop the skills necessary to get the job done quickly and efficiently.

If I had fished all night and caught nothing, I would probably be *selling* my nets, not washing them to get ready to go out again!

But **true fishermen don't quit.**

Peter kept on working while Jesus used his ship as a platform from which to address the huge crowd on the shore.

"Every pulpit is a fishing boat," said Dr. J. Vernon McGee, **"a place to give out the Word of God and attempt to catch fish."**

But there was another side to this request: Peter was a "captive audience" as he sat in the ship listening to the Word of God. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" ([Rom. 10:17](#), NKJV). **In a short time, Peter would have to exercise faith, and Jesus was preparing him.**

First He said, "Thrust out a little"; and then, when Peter was ready, He commanded, "Launch out into the deep."

If Peter had not obeyed the first seemingly insignificant command, he would never have participated in a miracle.

Peter must have been surprised when Jesus took command of the ship and its crew. After all, Jesus was a carpenter by trade ([Mark 6:3](#)), and what do carpenters know about fishing?

It was a well-known fact that, in the Sea of Galilee, you caught fish at night in the shallow water, not in the daytime in the deep water. What Jesus asked Peter to do was contrary to all of his training and experience, but Peter obeyed.

The key was his faith in the Word of God: "Nevertheless, at Thy word" (Luke 5:5).

The word translated "Master" ([Luke 5:5](#)) is used only by Luke and it has a variety of meanings, all of which speak of authority: chief commander, magistrate, governor of a city, and president of a college. **Peter was willing to submit to the authority of Jesus, even though he did not understand all that the Lord was doing. And remember, a great crowd was watching from the shore.**

How people respond to success is one indication of their true character. Instead of claiming the valuable catch for themselves, Peter and Andrew called their partners to share it. We are not

reservoirs, but channels of blessing, to share with others what God has graciously given to us.

- Bible Exposition Commentary

5:1-11 *Jesus Calls the First Disciples.* Jesus calls common fishermen to leave everything and become his disciples as fishers of men (cf. [v. 10](#)).

Jesus precedes the call by demonstrating his authority through the miraculous catch of fish.

5:1 lake of Gennesaret. *The Sea of Galilee.*

5:3 Getting into one of the boats... he... taught. Cf. [Mark 4:1-2](#).

5:4-5 let down your nets.... Master, we toiled all night and took nothing. Simon's reply to Jesus' command should not be seen as one of disrespect, in light of his addressing him as "Master" (cf. [8:24](#), [45](#); [9:33](#), [49](#); [17:13](#)), and then immediately adding, **But at your word I will let down the nets.**

5:6-7 A large number of fish is dramatized by their nets... breaking and their signaling to their partners... to come and help them. That both ships **began to sink** further emphasizes the great catch of fish. Jesus' miracle demonstrates that he is Lord of the sea and all that is in it.

5:8-9 Simon's reaction is appropriate for times when God himself appears to someone (cf. [Isa. 6:1-8](#); [Ezek. 1:28](#)): he fell down at Jesus' knees (in the midst of the fish!), asking the Lord to depart from him, lest he be judged as a sinful man. Peter was astonished by the miracle as a demonstration of the presence of God, which was the first step in understanding who Jesus is. At this point Peter simply understands that God works through Jesus, though he will come to a much deeper understanding, as this unfolds only over a period of time (see [Mark 8:29](#)).

But it is only after the resurrection that Peter and the disciples fully understand who Jesus is (cf. [Luke 24:31](#), [36-43](#), [52](#)).

5:10 Do not be afraid. See [1:13](#).

Catching men builds on the analogy of catching fish. It means bringing people into the kingdom of God, and into relationship with Jesus.

- ESV Study Bible

JESUS' DEMONSTRATION OF HIS AUTHORITY BY CALLING HIS FIRST DISCIPLES ([5:1-11](#))

(CF. [MATT. 4:18-22](#); [MARK 1:16-20](#))

The incident recorded here is obviously not the first time Jesus had been in contact with the men whom He called to be His disciples.

Luke already had stated that Jesus had healed Simon's mother-in-law which denotes previous contact with Simon and Andrew. This seems to be at least the third time Jesus had contact with these men.

In [John 1:41](#) Andrew told Peter that he had found the Messiah. Apparently the men at first did not follow Jesus on a "full-time" basis, for in [Mark 1:16-20](#) (also [Matt. 4:18-22](#)) Jesus called Simon, Andrew, James, and John.

Mark recorded that that call was before Jesus entered the synagogue in Capernaum and healed a man who was demon-possessed.

It is no wonder Peter invited Jesus home after the synagogue incident.

Now, sometime later, Peter and the others were still fishermen. It was at this point, now that Jesus had established His authority ([Luke 4:31-44](#)), that He called these men to full-time discipleship.

[5:1-3](#). The large throng **crowding around** Jesus prevented His teaching effectively as He stood **by the Lake of Gennesaret**, another name for the Sea of Galilee, by a village on the northwest shore. So **He went out a short distance in the water in Simon's boat so that they could all listen to the Word of God.**

[5:4-7](#). **On Jesus' request, Simon put out his nets and caught... a large amount of fish. Though Simon, an experienced fisherman, was sure he would not catch anything at that time of the day when the fish were deeper in the lake, he obeyed Jesus' word.**

This showed a significant amount of faith. The resulting catch **began to break the nets**, so they **filled** Simon's and another **boat** with the fish till **both boats... began to sink.**

[5:8-11](#). **The miracle of the fish brought two responses** in **Peter** and the others. They were **astonished** (lit., "amazement [*thambos*] seized him and all those with him," [v. 9](#);

cf. [4:36](#)) at the large catch of fish, **and Peter realized his sinfulness before Jesus** ([5:8](#)).

*The result was that Jesus made the fishermen fishers of **men**. Jesus' teaching, combined with His miraculous acts, showed that He had the authority to call the men and have them respond by leaving **everything**.*

- The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Luke 5

5:1-3 Lake Gennesaret was an alternate name for **the Sea of Galilee, which is also called the Sea of Tiberias** ([Jn 6:1](#); [21:1](#)). The boat Jesus chose belonged to **Simon** Peter, whose mother-in-law He had recently healed ([4:38-39](#)).

Jesus sat down in the boat; this was the normal posture for a teacher (see note at [4:19-21](#)).

5:4-7 **In spite of the fact that his night labors had been fruitless, at Jesus' command Peter responded in faith** (at

Your word, I'll let down the nets). His faith was rewarded with a catch so big that their nets tore and the boats almost sank.

5:8-11 Peter's realization of Jesus' divine power and holiness through the catch of fish was essentially the same as that of Job (Job 42:6) and Isaiah (Isa 6:5).

James and John, along with Simon Peter, formed Jesus' inner circle ([9:28](#); [Mt 26:37](#)).

*Jesus used the huge catch of fish to illustrate the kind of evangelistic impact Simon would have **catching people**;*
(see [Ac 2:41](#); [4:4](#)).

Peter and the other fishermen left everything and followed Jesus. This thoroughgoing commitment is the essence of true discipleship (14:26)

- HCSB Study Bible.

Setting Up the Section

If Luke chapter 4 focused on the ministry of Jesus to the masses, chapter 5 begins to focus on the ministry of Jesus with respect to the leadership of Israel.

So far in Luke's account, Jesus has been portrayed as a solitary teacher moving from place to place, teaching in the synagogues. In this passage He begins to call disciples to travel with Him in His ministry of teaching and healing.

When Jesus and His disciples don't conform to established norms, they soon encounter opposition.

5:1-11

A Shift of Emphasis

Luke's reference to the "Lake of Gennesaret" ([5:1](#) NIV) is what other Gospel writers usually call the Sea of Galilee. With a crowd of people pressing around Jesus at the water's edge, He borrows Peter's boat so He can sit down and teach. When He finishes, He tells Peter to sail out to deep water and drop the nets. Peter doesn't really want to, but does as Jesus instructed.

Critical Observation

Was this Jesus' first encounter with Peter, Andrew, James, and John? Not likely. **His progressive calling of the disciples seems to roughly follow this sequence:**

1. At the suggestion of John the Baptist, some of his disciples begin to follow Jesus ([John 1:36-51](#)).
2. Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow Him, which they begin to do as they continue their fishing business ([Matthew 4:18-22](#)).
3. After the miraculous event in this account, the four fishermen/disciples leave their boats to follow Jesus full time ([Luke 5:1-11](#)).
4. Jesus calls Levi, also known as Matthew ([Luke 5:27-28](#)).
5. Jesus calls the rest of the Twelve, but the specifics are not recorded in the Gospels.
6. **Others wish to follow Jesus, but the cost of discipleship is high** ([Matthew 8:18-22](#)).
7. Jesus spends a night in prayer prior to appointing twelve disciples as His apostles ([Luke 6:12-16](#)).

Peter's words in [verse 5](#) indicate that he and his partners are tired from working all night. Besides that, **they have just finished washing their nets. They will have to do it all over again.**

Also, Peter indicates that their efforts had been futile. Night was the best time to fish. **If they had not caught anything at night, why in the world should they catch anything in the daytime, the worst possible time to fish?** In addition, there seems to be a hint of irritation here.

Jesus' order could have seemed naïve...

Yet when Peter's obedience results in a miraculous catch of fish that almost sinks two boats, he humbly acknowledges his sinfulness ([5:6-8](#)).

***Peter thought he was the expert,
but now sees that Jesus is Lord!***

Peter doubted that they would make a great catch, and feared that his efforts would be wasted. Now he sees his Lord's sovereignty and his own sin.

Jesus' response to Peter can seem perplexing.

Peter confesses his sinfulness. Why does Jesus tell him not to be afraid (5:10)?

Peter is probably fearful because he not only recognizes his own sin but also the Lord's righteousness. His words reveal his awareness of Jesus' greatness.

Ultimately the Lord's provision for Peter's sin is even more abundant than His provision of fish.

That provision will be made at the cross of Calvary, where He will die in the sinner's place.

Communion and intimacy with God is abundantly provided by the Lord's sacrificial death. It is too early for Peter to know about this, and so he is simply assured, without any specific details being given.

At this point Peter, Andrew, James, and John leave their boats behind to follow Jesus full time.

Before calling them to catch people (5:10), Jesus lets them experience every fisherman's dream—a catch of a lifetime. Yet their most significant accomplishments lay ahead.

Take It Home

It's important to remember this text is not teaching that those who are most committed to Christ must leave their secular jobs to be His disciples. The disciples left their jobs, but that was necessary in order for them to be with Jesus while He was physically present on the earth.

After His resurrection and ascension, Jesus is present with all of us through His Holy Spirit. **Our calling goes deeper than our physical location or occupation. While we may not need to relocate to be in His presence, we are called—like the disciples—to leave behind all of our other allegiances and follow Him completely in every situation.**

- Layman's Bible Commentary

5:2 Fishermen on the Sea of Galilee used nets, often bell-shaped ones with lead weights around the edges. A net would be thrown flat onto the water, and the lead weights would cause it to sink around the fish. Then the fishermen would pull on a cord, drawing the net around the fish. Nets had to be kept in good condition, so they would be washed to remove weeds and then mended.

5:8 Simon Peter was awestruck at this miracle, and his first response was to realize his own insignificance in comparison to this man's greatness.

5:11 God has two requirements for coming to him. Like Peter, we must recognize our own sinfulness. Then, like these fishermen, we must realize that we can't save ourselves and that we need help. If we know that Jesus is the only one who can help us, we will be ready to leave everything and follow him.

5:11 This was the disciples' second call. After the first call (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20), Peter, Andrew, James, and John had gone back to fishing. They continued to watch Jesus, however, as he established his authority in the synagogue, healed the sick, and drove out demons. Here he also established his authority in their lives... From this point on, they left their nets and remained with Jesus. For us, following Jesus means more than just acknowledging him as Savior. We must leave our past behind and commit our future to him.

- Life Application Study Bible.

Chapter V

Christ Teaching and Healing

SUMMARY—*Christ Teaching from Peter's Boat. The Miraculous Draught of Fishes. Called to Be Fishers of Men. Cleansing the Leper. Palsied Man Healed. Matthew Called. Eateth with Publicans. Persecution Foretold. New Wine in Old Bottles.*

1. The people pressed... to hear the word of God. When the people are not prejudiced by false teachers they are usually eager to hear the Word. **Lake of Gennesaret.** Another name for the Sea of Galilee.

2. Saw two boats standing. Those of Peter and Andrew, and of James and John. See [Matt 4:18-22](#), for notes; also [Mark 1:16-20](#).

3. Which was Simon's. Simon Peter. **Taught the people out of the ship.** So that they could not press upon him. The “ship” was a fishing boat.

4, 5. Put out into the deep. Deep water. **For a draught.** He thus promises one.

At thy word. Though he had fished all night in vain, at Christ's word he would try again. He already was a disciple of Christ ([John 1:40-42](#)).

6. Their net brake. Tristram (*Land of Israel*) says of the fish in the Sea of Galilee: “The shoals are marvelous, black masses, many hundred yards long, with their black fins projecting out of the water as thick as they could pack. Any net would break that enclosed such a shoal.”

8. Fell down at Jesus' knees. Filled with awe and reverence at the miracle that had drawn the shoal to their net.

10. Said unto Simon. Not to him alone ([Matt 1:19](#)).
Simon, Andrew, James and John were all told to become “fishers of men.”

11. They forsook all. The four just named. **Before this all were disciples; henceforth they follow Jesus personally.** These all together cast the gospel net on Pentecost and had a mighty draught.

- Johnson's Notes on the New Testament.

The Calling of His Disciples ([5:1-6:16](#))

1. Four Fisherman ([5:1-26](#))

[5:1](#) Lake of Gennesaret. I.e., the Sea of Galilee, sometimes also called the Sea of Tiberius ([John 6:1](#); [21:1](#)). It is actually a large, freshwater lake, over 690 feet below sea level, and serves as the main source of water and commerce for the Galilee region.

[5:2](#) washing their nets. Having fished all night with nothing to show for their labor (cf. [v. 5](#)), they were drying and mending their nets for another night's work.

[5:3](#) He sat. See notes on [4:20](#); [Matthew 5:1](#).

5:4 *let down your nets*. Normally, the fish that were netted in shallow water at night would migrate during the daylight hours to waters too deep to reach easily with nets, which is why Peter fished at night. Peter, no doubt, thought Jesus' directive made no sense, but he obeyed anyway, and was rewarded for his obedience. ([v. 6](#)).

5:8 *Depart from me*. The remarkable catch of fish was clearly a miracle, astonishing to all the fishermen in Capernaum ([v. 9](#)).

Peter immediately realized he was in the presence of the Holy One exercising His divine power, and he was stricken with shame over his own sin. Cf. [Exodus 20:19](#); [33:20](#); [Judges 13:22](#); [Job 42:5](#), [6](#). See note on [Isaiah 6:5](#).

5:11 *forsook all and followed Him*. See note on [Matthew 4:18](#). Luke gave a more detailed account of the second call of these disciples.

- The MacArthur Bible Commentary.

Chapter 5

In this chapter, we have,

- I. Christ preaching to the people out of Peter's ship, for want of a better pulpit ([v. 1-3](#)).

- II. The recompence he made to Peter for the loan of his boat, in a miraculous draught of fishes, by which he intimated to him and his partners his design to make them, as apostles, fishers of men ([v. 4-11](#)).
- III. His cleansing the leper ([v. 12-15](#)).
- IV. A short account of his private devotion and public ministry ([v. 16,17](#)).
- V. His cure of the man sick of the palsy ([v. 18-26](#)).
- VI. His calling Levi the publican, and conversing with publicans on that occasion ([v. 27-32](#)).
- VII. His justifying his disciples in not fasting so frequently as the disciples of John and the Pharisees did ([v. 33-39](#)).

Christ Preaching to the People Out of Peter's Ship, for Want of a Better Pulpit

[5:1-3](#)

This passage of story fell, in order of time, before the two miracles we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be fishers of men, [Matthew 4:18](#), and [Mark 1:16](#). They had not related this miraculous draught of fishes at that time, having only in view the calling of his disciples; but Luke gives us that story as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which had not been written in the foregoing books, [John 20:30, 31](#). Observe here,

- I. What vast crowds attended Christ's preaching: The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God ([v. 1](#)), insomuch that no house would contain them, but he was forced to draw them out to the strand, that they might be reminded of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand upon the sea shore ([Genesis 22:17](#)), and yet of them but a remnant shall be saved, [Romans 9:27](#). The people flocked about him (so the word signifies); they showed respect to his preaching, though not without some rudeness to his person, which was very excusable, for they pressed upon him. Some would reckon this a discredit to him, to be thus cried up by the vulgar, when none of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him; but he reckoned it an honour to him, for their souls were as precious as the souls of the grandees, and it is his aim to bring not so much the mighty as the many sons to God. It was foretold concerning him that to him shall the gathering of the people be.

Christ was a popular preacher; and though he was able, at twelve, to dispute with the doctors, yet he chose, at thirty, to preach to the capacity of the vulgar.

See how the people relished good preaching, though under all external disadvantages: they pressed to hear the word of God; they could perceive it to be the word of God, by the divine power and evidence that went along with it, and therefore they coveted to hear it.

The Recompence He Made to Peter for the Loan of His Boat, in a Miraculous Draught of Fishes; and the Call of Peter, James and John

5:4-11

II. What poor conveniences Christ had for preaching: He stood by the lake of Gennesareth ([v. 1](#)), upon a level with the crowd, so that they could neither see him nor hear him; he was lost among them, and, every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, and in danger of being crowded into the water: what must he do? It does not appear that his hearers had any contrivance to give him advantage, but there were two ships, or fishing boats, brought ashore, one belonging to Simon and Andrew, the other to Zebedee and his sons, [v. 2](#). At first, Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance (so Matthew tells us, [ch. 4:18](#)); but he waited till they came to land, and till the fishermen, that is, the servants, were gone out of them having washed their nets, and thrown them by for that time: so Christ entered into that ship that belonged to Simon, and begged of him that he would lend it him for a pulpit; and, though he might have commanded him, yet, for love's sake, he rather prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land, which would be the worse for his being heard, but Christ would have it so, that he might the better be seen; and it is his being lifted up that draws men to him. Wisdom cries in the top of high places, [Proverbs 8:2](#). It intimates that Christ had a strong voice (strong indeed, for he made the dead to hear it), and that he did not desire to favour himself. **There he sat down, and taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord.**

III. What a particular acquaintance Christ, hereupon, fell into with these fishermen. They had had some conversation with him before, which began at John's baptism ([John 1:40, 41](#)); they were with him at Cana of Galilee ([John 2:2](#)), and in Judea ([John 4:3](#)); but as yet they were not called to attend him constantly, and therefore here we have them at their calling, and now it was that they were called into a more intimate fellowship with Christ.

1. When Christ had done preaching, he ordered Peter to apply himself to the business of his calling again: Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets, [v. 4](#). It was not the sabbath day, and therefore, as soon as the lecture was over, he set them to work. Time spent on week-days in the public exercises of religion may be but little hindrance to us in time, and a great furtherance to us in temper of mind, in our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling when we have been in the mount with God, and from thence fetch a double blessing into our worldly employments, and thus have them sanctified to us by the word and prayer!

It is our wisdom and duty so to manage our religious exercises as that they may befriend our worldly business, and so to manage our worldly business as that it may be no enemy to our religious exercises.

2. Peter having attended upon Christ in his preaching, Christ will accompany him in his fishing. **He staid with Christ at the shore, and now Christ will launch out with him into the deep.** Note,

Those that will be constant followers of Christ shall have him a constant guide to them.

3. **Christ ordered Peter and his ship's crew to cast their nets into the sea, which they did, in obedience to him, though they had been hard at it all night, and had caught nothing, v. 4,5.** We may observe here,

(1.) How melancholy their business had now been: "Master, we have toiled all the night, when we should have been asleep in our beds, and have taken nothing, but have had our labour for our pains." One would have thought that this should have excused them from hearing the sermon; but such a love had they to the word of God that it was more refreshing and reviving to them, after a wearisome night, than the softest slumbers. But they mention it to Christ, when he bids them go a fishing again. Note,

[1.] **Some callings are much more toilsome than others** are, and more perilous; yet Providence has so ordered it for the common good that there is no useful calling so discouraging but some or other have a genius for it. Those who follow their business, and get

abundance by it with a great deal of ease, should think with compassion of those who cannot follow theirs but with a great fatigue, and hardly get a bare livelihood by it. When we have rested all night, let us not forget those who have toiled all night, as Jacob, when he kept Laban's sheep.

[2.] **Be the calling ever so laborious, it is good to see people diligent in it, and make the best of it; these fishermen, that were thus industrious, Christ singled out for his favourites. They were fit to be preferred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ who had thus learned to endure hardness.**

[3.] Even those who are most diligent in their business often meet with disappointments; they who toiled all night yet caught nothing; for **the race is not always to the swift. God will have us to be diligent, purely in duty to his command and dependence upon his goodness, rather than with an assurance of worldly success.** We must do our duty, and then leave the event to God.

[4.] When we are tired with our worldly business, and crossed in our worldly affairs, we are welcome to come to Christ, and spread our case before him, who will take cognizance of it.

(2.) How ready their obedience was to the command of Christ: Nevertheless, at thy word, I will let down the net.

[1.] Though they had toiled all night, yet, if Christ bid them, they will renew their toil, for they know that they who wait on him shall renew their strength, as work is renewed upon their hands; for every fresh service they shall have a fresh supply of grace sufficient.

[2.] Though they have taken nothing, yet, if Christ bid them let down for a draught, they will hope to take something. Note, **We must not abruptly quit the callings wherein we are called because we have not the success in them we promised ourselves.**

The ministers of the gospel must continue to let down that net, though they have perhaps toiled long and caught nothing; and this is thank-worthy, to continue unwearied in our labours, though we see not the success of them.

[3.] In this they have an eye to the word of Christ, and a dependence upon that: "At thy word, I will let down the net, because thou dost enjoin it, and thou dost encourage it." We are then likely to speed well when we follow the guidance of Christ's word.

4. **The draught of fish they caught was so much beyond what was ever known that it amounted to a miracle (v. 6):** They enclosed a great

multitude of fishes, so that their net broke, and yet, which is strange, they did not lose their draught. It was so great a draught that they had not hands sufficient to draw it up; but they were obliged to beckon to their partners, who were at a distance, out of call, to come and help them, [v. 7](#). But **the greatest evidence of the vastness of the draught was that they filled both the ships with fish, to such a degree that they overloaded them, and they began to sink**, so that the fish had like to have been lost again with their own weight. Thus many an overgrown estate, raised out of the water, returns to the place whence it came. Suppose these ships were but five or six tons a piece, what a vast quantity of fish must there be to load, nay to over-load, them both!

Now by this vast draught of fishes,

(1.) **Christ intended to show his dominion in the seas as well as on the dry land, over its wealth as over its waves.** Thus he would show that he was that Son of man under whose feet all things were put, and particularly the fish of the sea and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, [Psa. 8:8](#).

(2.) **He intended hereby to confirm the doctrine he had just now preached out of Peter's ship.** We may suppose that the people on shore, who heard the sermon, having a notion that the preacher was a prophet sent of God, carefully attended his motions afterward, and staid halting about there, to see what he would do next;

and this miracle immediately following would be a confirmation to their faith, of his being at least a teacher come from God.

(3.) He intended hereby to repay Peter for the loan of his boat; for Christ's gospel now, as his ark formerly in the house of Obed-edom, will be sure to make amends, rich amends, for its kind entertainment. None shall shut a door or kindle a fire in God's house for nought, [Malachi 1:10](#). Christ's recompences for services done to his name are abundant, they are superabundant.

(4.) **He intended hereby to give a specimen, to those who were to be his ambassadors to the world, of the success of their embassy**, that though they might for a time, and in one particular place, toil and catch nothing, yet they should be instrumental to bring in many to Christ, and enclose many in the gospel net.

5. The impression which this miraculous draught of fishes made upon Peter was very remarkable.

(1.) All concerned were astonished, and the more astonished for their being concerned. **All the boat's crew were astonished at the draught of fishes which they had taken (v. 9)**; they were all surprised; and the more they considered it, and all the circumstances of it, the more they were wonder-struck, I had almost said thunder-struck, at the thought of it, and so were also James and John, who were partners with Simon ([v. 10](#)), and who, for aught that appears, were not so well acquainted with Christ, before

this, as Peter and Andrew were. Now they were the more affected with it,

[1.] Because they understood it better than others did. They that were well acquainted with this sea, and it is probable had plied upon it many years, had never seen such a draught of fishes fetched out of it, nor any thing like it, any thing near it; and therefore they could not be tempted to diminish it, as others might, by suggesting that it was accidental at this time, and what might as well have happened at any time. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles that those who were best acquainted with them most admired them.

[2.] Because they were most interested in it, and benefited by it. Peter and his part-owners were gainers by this great draught of fishes; it was a rich booty for them and therefore it transported them, and their joy was a helper to their faith. Note, When Christ's works of wonder are to us, in particular, works of grace, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

(2.) Peter, above all the rest, was astonished to such a degree that he fell down at Jesus's knees, as he sat in the stern of his boat, and said, as one in an ecstasy or transport, that knew not where he was or what he said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord, [v. 8](#). Not that he feared the weight of the fish would sink him because he was a sinful man, but that he thought himself unworthy of the favour of Christ's presence in his boat, and worthy that it should be to him a matter rather of terror than of comfort. This word of Peter's came from the same principle with theirs who, under the Old-Testament, so often said that they did exceedingly fear and quake at the

extraordinary display of the divine glory and majesty. It was the language of Peter's humility and self-denial, and had not the least tincture of the devils' dialect, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God?

[1.] His acknowledgment was very just, and what it becomes us all to make: I am a sinful man, O Lord. **Note, Even the best men are sinful men, and should be ready upon all occasions to own it,** and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to him who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves?

[2.] His inference from it was what might have been just, though really it was not so. If I be a sinful man, as indeed I am, I ought to say, "Come to me, O Lord, or let me come to thee, or I am undone, for ever undone." But, considering what reason sinful men have to tremble before the holy Lord God and to dread his wrath, Peter may well be excused, if, in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness, he cried out on a sudden, Depart from me. Note, Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance from him. **We must all own ourselves sinful men, and that therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us; but we must therefore fall down at his knees, to pray him that he would not depart; for woe unto us if he leave us, if the Saviour depart from the sinful man.**

6. The occasion which Christ took from this to intimate to Peter ([v. 10](#)), and soon after to James and John ([Matthew 4:21](#)), his purpose to make them his apostles, and

instruments of planting his religion in the world. He said unto Simon, who was in the greatest surprise of any of them at this prodigious draught of fishes, "Thou shalt both see and do greater things than these; fear not; let not this astonish thee; be not afraid that, after having done thee this honour, it is so great that I shall never do thee more; no, **henceforth thou shalt catch men, by enclosing them in the gospel net,** and that shall be a greater instance of the Redeemer's power, and his favour to thee, than this is; that shall be a more astonishing miracle, and infinitely more advantageous than this." **When by Peter's preaching three thousand souls were, in one day, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered.**

Lastly, The fishermen's farewell to their calling, in order to their constant attendance on Christ ([v. 11](#)): **When they had brought their ships to land, instead of going to seek for a market for their fish, that they might make the best hand they could of this miracle, they forsook all and followed him,** being more solicitous to serve the interests of Christ than to advance any secular interests of their own. It is observable that they left all to follow Christ, when their calling prospered in their hands more than ever it had done and they had had uncommon success in it. **When riches increase, and we are therefore most in temptation to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for the service of Christ, this is thank-worthy.**

- Matthew Henry's Commentary

SEPTEMBER 29, 2002

Breaking Nets, Sinking Boats and Saving Men

Missions Week

by **John Piper**

Scripture: Luke 5:1–11

Topic: Evangelism

Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; 2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

I have chosen this text as part of a short series of transition messages as we expand from one corporate worship site to two. My desire is to put this expansion in a Biblical context and to give it meaning as an expression of the aims of Jesus Christ. Today I want to see our expansion to Roseville as an expression of Christ's aim that we be more fruitful in evangelism – or as some would say, that we be soul-winners, or as the biblical expression has it, "fishers of men," or as others would say, that we "make disciples."

There are some of us that believe that Bethlehem is on the brink of continued extraordinary growth. Of course, the sovereign Lord could blow that away in a minute. He owes us nothing. And we are not deserving of any blessing we have. But given what he seems to be doing now and in the past couple years, there is good reason to think that his wind of his mercy is at our back. And so we should work while it is day. Night comes when no man can work.

My burden today to preach and to pray in such a way that what happens at the North Extension site and downtown is a new fruitfulness in evangelism – more people passing from death to life, and from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, and from unbelief to belief, through the Christ-empowered witness and love of the members of this church. Churches can grow without this. But growth without these things is not the best kind of growth. We need to be much more aggressive in loving witness that wins people to Christ and folds them into a fellowship of believers and grows them into mature disciples of Jesus who love to spread a passion for God's supremacy in all things for the joy of all peoples.

That is one thing that should mark Bethlehem on its two sites. So let's watch Jesus and listen to Jesus in Luke 5:1-11.

The Point of This Text

I think Jesus, in the way he acted and spoke in this situation, and Luke, in the way he tells the story, are both intentionally turning a miracle catch of fish into a parable about catching people for the kingdom. In other words, Jesus was not merely teaching the word of God as he sat in the boat (vv. 1, 3); he was showing something, by his actions and words, about how he means for his followers to win men to faith.

Here is the point that I think Jesus and Luke are making in this whole story. I'll say it and then back up and try to show it from the text.

By Jesus' power and authority
multitudes of people
will be caught for eternal kingdom blessings
by the followers of Jesus who
teach the word of God,
obey the commands of Jesus,
humble themselves, and
treasure Christ above all.

Let's break this down into several pieces and see where they come from in the text. First, Jesus is saying that great multitudes of people are going to be won by his power and authority. Jesus had intentionally chosen to teach from a fishing boat (verse 3). So the boat is transformed, so to speak, into an instrument of evangelism. That sets up the parable. The boat is a place where the word of God is proclaimed to the crowds and where fish are caught. Then in verse 4 Jesus tells Simon to push this gospel-bearing boat into the deep water for a catch. "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch. Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing,

but I will do as You say and let down the nets.'" This interchange between Jesus and Simon emphasizes the power and authority of Jesus that is about to be displayed. You say it. I'll do it. But what's the use. We know fishing. You're a carpenter. Verse 6: "When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish (plh/qoj ivcqu,wn polu.), and their nets began to break; 7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink."

So the catch is so amazing that the nets are breaking and the boats are sinking. In other words, the point is: this is an utterly unprecedented catch of fish in a location that seemed hopelessly unproductive the night before. And it was caught at the powerful and authoritative word of Jesus.

The word used to describe the amount of fish is literally "multitude" (plh/qoj). It's used over a dozen times in the book of Acts for a multitude of people. Jesus will give it that interpretation in verse 10: "And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.'" The multitude of fish caught by Jesus' power and authority is a pointer to what would happen later in the book of Acts and beyond. Acts 5:14, "And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes (plh,qh) of both men and women." Acts 14:1, "In Iconium . . . a large number (polu. plh/qoj) of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks."

And the catching here, of course, is not to kill and eat, but to save and feed. The comparison isn't between what happens to fish and what happens to people. The comparison is between trusting Christ to help you gather fish and trusting Christ to help you gather people. The gathering of people is for rest (Matthew 11:28-30) and joy (John 15:11) and eternal life (John 3:36).

So I repeat the first part of my summary of this text: "By Jesus' power and authority multitudes of people will be caught for eternal kingdom blessings – for salvation . . .

. . . by followers of Jesus." We see this point clearly in verse 10: "And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.'" Just as it was James and John (v. 10) and Peter, the human fishermen, who brought in the fish, so it will be human fishers of men who bring in the people. It is by Jesus' power and authority that they come, but they come through the evangelistic work of man. Converts to Christ come by Christ's power, but by man's agency. "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me," Jesus said, "so go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:18-19). Christ is the decisive power and authority in winning people, but followers of Christ are the instruments of that power.

Now, what does this acted-out parable tell us about the kind of people who go man-fishing and win others to Christ, so that we can pray and strive to be that kind of people?

I see four things in the text to answer that question: "By Jesus' power and authority multitudes of people will be caught for eternal kingdom blessings by the followers of Jesus, who . . .

. . . teach the word of God."

I take this from verses 1 and 3. Verse 1: "Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret." So Luke makes explicitly clear what Jesus had brought to this moment for man-fishing. He had brought the word of God. If we dare risk the analogy: this was his bait for man-fishing. This is what was drawing the crowd of man-fishes. They were swarming to hear the word of God.

This in fact is a very fish-honoring, as well as God-honoring bait. The word of God is the greatest word there is. The word of God is not some little jingle to manipulate customers to buy your product. The word of God is truth that aims to claim a person's rational mind and win a person's authentic affections. So we may be unashamed when we man-fish with the word of God. It is truth, not technique.

Then Jesus prepares for the parable by deciding to teach the word of God from a fishing boat. Verses 2-3: "He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. 3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat." Just as Jesus is gathering a people with the word of God from a fishing boat, so Peter and the followers of Jesus will gather people like man-fishers with the word of God.

I think it's significant to see that he "taught" the people. Verse 3: "He sat down and began teaching." At times he proclaims, at other times he teaches. Both are important in the life of the church today. But I want to suggest that in our evangelism – our man-fishing with the bait of the word of God – should involve a lot of teaching, a lot of explaining.

We live in a society that does not know the true nature of God and the gospel. They don't know the God-centered nature of what sin is, and what God's glory and law are, and who Christ is and what happened on the cross and what faith is and what love is and what heaven and hell are. Therefore, to win these people we need to develop structures of teaching. And I don't mean only formal teaching. And I don't mean stop sharing the short testimonies and snapshots of Jesus. But let's add ways of offering unbelievers more and more of Christ so that they can

make a credible response to a whole message. Let's dream and plan and be aggressive in our love for lost people by coming up with ways that we can keep telling them and showing them more and more truth. Jesus was teaching in the boat to illustrate man-fishing.

This seems to be the way Paul did it sometimes. In Acts 19:9-10 Luke said that Paul "reasoned daily in the hall of Tyrannus [that is, he taught]. 10 This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." What a great church planting strategy: teach unbelievers daily in a public hall about the Christian worldview for two years!

That's the first mark of the disciples who do man-fishing. They teach the word of God. The second is that they . . .

. . . obey the commands of Jesus.

When Jesus told Simon in verse 4 to push out into the deep, "Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets'" (v. 5). If Simon had not obeyed, there would probably have been no catch. Jesus could make the fish jump into the boat. But he doesn't usually act that way. He calls us to be his instruments in man-fishing. And he gives us Peter as an example. Not a perfect one. But a good one.

Peter is not brimming with faith. "Master, we worked all night. We know fishing. You don't. This place is fished out. Besides, we are exhausted. We were up all night." Oh, how many are the excuses we find for not man-fishing. But isn't it encouraging that the Lord does not pitch Peter overboard, but accepts his half-hearted obedience and does the miracle anyway. I have heard dozens of testimonies to this effect. I was tired. It didn't

seem like a very good time to speak of Christ . . . but I did it, and the great, never-weary Christ acted. One of the brothers at the Friday morning prayer meeting told us of a remarkable circumstance in which he led someone to Christ this week. The time is never perfect. And our hearts are never perfect. But Christ honors simple efforts to obey him.

That's the second mark of a man-fisher. He obeys Jesus. Here's the third: Those who do man-fishing . . .

. . . humble themselves.

When Peter and the others saw the blessing Jesus had given them – the way he had used them to gather the fish in spite of their half-hearted obedience – verse 8b says, "Simon Peter . . . fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' Oh, how we need to see this and experience it.

It's the opposite of saying: "Wow, look at the way we get blessed when we follow Jesus! Biggest catch of fish we've ever had. We could market this! Let's get a movement going. Call it, 'Trust Jesus, get fish!' Hey, hey! Let's go to Roseville!' No, Peter looked at grace – pure grace – and felt utterly unworthy and said so. That is a good place to start in evangelism. Cockey witnesses contradict the message of grace. So let's waken to the fact that what is moving to Roseville is a band of half-hearted, imperfectly obedient justified sinners who feel utterly unworthy of every blessing we have, especially salvation. Then we may be ready to fish.

Oh, that all Bethlehem attenders would read Jonathan Edwards' book, *The Religious Affections*, especially the chapter on "Evangelical Humiliation," where he says,

A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble

brokenhearted love. The desires of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires: their hope is a humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable, and full of glory, is a humble, brokenhearted joy, and leaves the Christian more poor in spirit, and more like a little child, and more disposed to a universal lowliness of behavior. (Religious Affections, Yale, 1959, pp. 339f.)

Now we have seen three marks of faithful man-fishers: they teach the word of God, they obey Jesus' commandments, they humble themselves. Now, finally, fruitful man-fishers . . .

. . . treasure Christ above all.

In verse 10b "Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.'" Because he knows that he will one day die for Peter's sin (Mark 10:45), Jesus takes the paralyzing fear out of his humility and leaves in its place a lionhearted meekness and bold brokenness. Peter and James and John respond with hearts overflowing with the value of knowing Jesus: "When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." This is what it means to follow Jesus: he is more valuable to us than everything (see Luke 14:33). I count everything as loss compared to knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Philippians 3:8).

So here is my prayer as half of us get ready to leave familiar and comfortable surroundings and go north to worship – not a very great sacrifice: May the power and authority of Jesus Christ move multitudes of people into eternal kingdom blessings by means of his disciples at Bethlehem who teach the word of God, obey the commands of Jesus, humble ourselves, and treasure Christ above all.

*John Piper (@JohnPiper) is founder and teacher of desiringGod.org and chancellor of Bethlehem College & Seminary. For 33 years, he served as pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is author of more than 50 books, including *A Peculiar Glory*.*