

Forsaking All to Follow Christ
Luke 5:1-11

NKJ Luke 5:1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,

2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets.

3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."

6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

7 So 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 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 which they had taken;

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

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Dear friends, I'd like to ask you to humor me for a moment. I'd like to ask you some questions, they're not difficult. I'll give you two choices, you tell me which one you choose.

Christ or Idols?

Christ or Caesar?

Christ or Mammon (money)?

Christ or Your Favorite Sin?

Christ or Comfort?

Christ or Your Job?

Christ or Your Family?

Christ or *YOUR LIFE?*

Now why did I run you through those questions? And incidentally, you all did pretty well – HERE AND NOW.

I did so in an attempt to bring home what we read in verse 11 but so frequently don't think about, *they forsook all and followed Him.*

What does it mean to forsake all and follow Christ? To obey the command Jesus gives to all who would call themselves his disciples, **"take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mark 10:21)** You would all probably agree that it means we can't follow Christ and false gods, but I think people tend to forget or gloss over the single-mindedness (or perhaps single-heartedness would be a better way of putting it) that Jesus requires of those who would be His disciples. And I think we need to come to grips with the fact that there are many, many, people in the world who want to be called followers of Christ, who are not actually following him in the sense that Jesus commands.

If I can take a few liberties with the song title, "everyone wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die to self"

These verses we just read are not the first time Jesus met Simon, the Apostle He named Peter. We remember that last week after he had preached in the synagogue at Capernaum, he entered into the house of Peter, and actually miraculously cured Peter's mother in law in Luke 4:38-39, even that incident wasn't the first time they met. Turn in your bibles to John 1:35

35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.

36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?"

39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.

41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ).

42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone).

It would appear that Peter was acquainted with Jesus before this incident, probably he would have called him a friend. He knew Jesus was a Rabbi, that is a teacher, he knew also of his power to heal, having witnessed it in his own home, he also knew that John the Baptist had testified that Jesus was the promised one of God, the long-awaited Messiah. And yet, while John is very favorably disposed towards Jesus, he was not yet *following Him*.

As the scene opens we have Jesus preaching by the Lake of Gennesaret or what Matthew called the Sea of Galilee. This was a large inland lake about 21 KM Long and 11 KM wide. The lake itself is an astounding 633 Feet below sea level in the depths of the Jordan Rift. Because it is in a depression, surrounded by hills, it is liable to these sudden down-drafts which can whip up incredible storms. I was told by a pastor who visited the area, boats are still routinely sunk on the Sea of Galilee in the midst of unpredicted storms.

Now this lake and its storms are going to be important in Luke's Gospel. It forms the hub, so to speak for Christ's Galilean ministry. Most of the towns he visits surround the lake, and on the eastern shore are non-Jewish communities – the ten cities of the Decapolis. A lot of the traveling Jesus does therefore, is going to be by boat. There's a lot of wisdom therefore in calling fishermen to be your Apostles, not that the fact that they could handle a boat is the only reason Jesus calls them or even an important one.

In any event Peter, and his brother and his partners all worked in the family business. They earned their living fishing on the lake. Professional Fishermen tend to be rough folk.

Example – trips to Maine – Lobstermen

That too will be important.

Peter and his brothers have been fishing all night when Jesus encounters them –
Night is the best time to fish on the lake
Washing/Mending Nets – PREPARING to Put them away

Jesus first uses Peter's boat as a pulpit for preaching to the multitudes who had come to hear him.

Imagine the people straining to touch him, the resulting difficulty of being heard, the real danger of being crushed. So by casting off a little he is able to address the crowd, and do what he came to do, preach the Good News of the Coming of the kingdom.

Then in verse 4 he commands Peter to launch out into the DEEP WATER and let down the nets for a catch

Now at this point, Peter is a little put out. "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing" [Comment] but then out of friendship and respect for Christ he says: "nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." [Comment]

Notice how Peter addresses him at this point - *Master*. Ok Chief, we'll do it.

Immediately on doing this, they catch so many fish their nets are close to breaking. Peter panicking calls over his partners to help with the huge catch.

But then this realization breaks over Him, this *man doesn't only have power and authority over demons and sickness, He Has power over all of creation - He commands the very fish of the lake and they obey Him.*

I believe that it is at this point, that the Holy Spirit effectually calls Peter to faith in Jesus Christ. One moment it is Jesus the friend and teacher, and in the next moment He has fallen at His feet which any Jew would have known as an act of worship – REMEMBER THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WHO STUBBORNLY REFUSED TO FALL DOWN BEFORE CAESAR – and called Him *Kurios* – Lord.

In that moment though you see Peter, realizing not only who Jesus really is, but seeing so clearly who he himself was by comparison – a Sinful man.

Isaiah in Isaiah 6 sees the vision of the Lord God in His temple, and confronted by His holiness, He laments "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

And now Peter, awestruck and terrified, expresses the same lament. The holiness of Jesus, has become to him a mirror in which he all too well sees his own sin and total lack of righteousness.

Application: Let this example be a lesson to you as well: Your reaction when we meet the Lord Jesus for the first time should involve not only faith, but repentance. In that moment, and forever after you

should be convicted of your sins and your total inability to save yourselves, and deploring those sins you should hate them and turn from them.

Example – DRIVING to work

But then Jesus speaks those words of comfort: "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men."

Jesus is saying Peter, don't be afraid, I have come not as your righteous judge, but as your Savior. You have been saved by Faith, fear no more.

Now he tells these men, no longer will they be catching fish, they will be catching *men*. [comment on what this means]

Whereas before it is clear that Peter and His brothers, like the crowds, had been happy to hear Christ, and to witness and benefit from his miracles, now they *believe in Him and in the Message of the Coming of the Kingdom*. Now they are ready and willing to forsake all and Follow Him. So they leave their relatives, their business, and immediately they follow Christ.

Let me give you three applications drawn from these verses:

1) *The importance of obeying Christ's Commands*: Jesus said in Matthew 28:19

***19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."***

We are to obey Christ's commands and use his methods for the advancement of HIS KINGDOM. Remembering that he also told us that in the matter of salvation "***With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.***" (Mat. 19:26)

Peter could have said: "Now look here Jesus, I'm the fisherman, you catch fish at night, I'll be happy to instruct you as to the proper methodologies for fish catching, and obviously this area of the lake isn't optimal for fishing at present, etc."

I can't tell you how many times, I hear almost exactly that when it comes to ministry.

Preaching is out, Demographics etc. Not an ordinary means of grace ministry. Tips, tricks, methods, etc.

But in fact, what we are called to do is to follow Christ.

2) *The Consolation and Comfort we gain from this*: What consolation there is in the assurance that when we follow Christ's commands He will bless the methods he Himself ordains! Christ has promised to bless these methods and these alone.

Comfort and Promise – Don't Be Afraid/You will Catch men, using the methodologies he *commands*
Launch into the DEEP – MEN WILL BE CAUGHT

Is. 55:9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

10 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,

11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

John 3:8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

General/Effectual Call

SPURGEON QUOTE

3) Lastly the importance of Forsaking All to Follow Jesus

There are many who are content with the relationship to Christ that Peter had prior to this incident. Perhaps slipping into church on occasion, enjoying a sermon or two every now and then.

But essentially their life is unchanged.

Haven't committed, haven't closed with Christ or his church

Important as we consider membership

What does it mean to forsake all, take up the cross and follow Jesus.

Let me exhort you in this

David Robertson – Scottish Church Planter - best kind of evangelism

Not canned, people who are excited about Christ

Working Example: Cold Call Man once pointed out to me a fatal flaw in my presentation – didn't believe in the product myself!

How can you invite people to do what you yourself haven't?

Perhaps you believe you can't give these things you love up

What does it mean to forsake all for Christ?

You will have this great assurance:

Matt. 10:29 So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, 30 "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time -- houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions -- and in the age to come, eternal life.