

Message #19**Luke 5:1-11**

Luke was obviously very interested in those first Apostles. Keep in mind that he had primarily been associated with Paul, and he certainly knew the miracle Christ performed in stopping him on the way to Damascus. But he was very interested in the other Apostles who had been called before Paul. As we look down through this text, we learn some very interesting and very inspired data.

Now the primary guy that this narrative centers on is Peter. In fact, I truly believe that Dr. Luke got this story directly from Peter. We may remember Luke said he interviewed those who were “eye-witnesses” at the beginning (Luke 1:1). There are a total of four Apostles called out in this text, but Simon Peter takes front and center stage. It is interesting that 3 ½ years later after Christ has risen from the dead, another very similar event will take place that will again focus on Peter. There are some amazing similarities between what happens here and what happens in John 21:

- 1) The disciples have been fishing all night and did not catch a thing in both accounts.
- 2) Jesus tells them to cast their nets – in Luke from the boat, in John from the beach.
- 3) The disciples obey and they take in a large catch of fish.
- 4) The catch affects the nets – in Luke the nets begin to break and the boat began to sink; in John the net was so full they could not drag it in.
- 5) Peter reacts to the catch – in Luke he bows down; in John he dives into the sea.
- 6) Jesus is identified as the Lord in both gospels.
- 7) The other fishermen are quiet with the exception of John speaking to Peter in John.
- 8) After the episode, the Apostles follow Jesus Christ – in Luke the first time; in John recommitment.
- 9) In both instances, the catch illustrates great success and impact in ministry.

JESUS PERFORMS A FISHING MIRACLE TO CALL HIS FIRST DISCIPLES / APOSTLES, AND THE MIRACLE PICTURES WHAT THEY WOULD DO FOR HIM.

There are five lessons that we learn from this text:

LESSON #1 – The calling of the Apostles takes place in the context of teaching the Word of God. **5:1-3**

It is clear from **verse 1** that Jesus was drawing big crowds because of His ability to teach the Word of God. In fact, the crowds were so large that the people were “pressing around” Him. They were physically pressuring Him to the point that it was becoming a physical threat. Jesus was becoming a popular Person, and people were amazed by His teaching ability. Crowds were gathering and straining to hear Him.

Now this particular event occurred while He was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name for the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16). This area was located south of Capernaum, and the name of it today is “el-Ghuweir.” Luke calls it a “lake,” but the other writers call it a “sea.” We could say the same thing about Lake Michigan. Actually, Luke specifically uses the noun “sea” to refer to a sea like the Mediterranean. He had certainly traveled the seas, and he saw the difference.

This Lake or Sea of Galilee is a big lake. It is about eight miles wide and fourteen miles long, and it is a very popular fishing lake. In fact, one historian said there are 22 known species of fish in this Lake.

The crowds were pressing around Him and, because of the physical threat of the crowd, Christ decided that the best thing to do was to get into a boat and go out in the water a short distance, so He could continue teaching.

According to **verse 2**, He spotted two boats. These boats were at the shore, and the fishermen were out of the boats washing their nets. They were getting ready to go back out at night to go fishing. Now I find this fascinating because it does not appear as though these fishermen had really zeroed in on Jesus’ teaching. They are doing their normal work.

I believe this is a key to fruitful ministry. God calls people who work and do their job, not those who sit around and do nothing. God saved me in the midst of a radio career. He led me to school while working at a factory. He let me get an education while working for Kregel Publications, and He opened the door for ministry while working as sales manager of the company. Now I don’t believe any of this would have happened if I would have been sitting around on welfare doing nothing except collecting a government check. These guys were washing fishing nets.

According to **verse 3**, Jesus just got into Simon’s boat. This is no coincidence, because Peter will become a key Apostle. Jesus got into Simon’s boat and asked him to row out in the water a little way. Now this boat was probably about 20-30 feet long.

In fact, a boat was discovered recently that had been buried in the silt in Israel, and because of a drought, the water receded and it was discovered. Through carbon dating, it was determined that it came right from this time period. That boat was 25.5 feet long, 7.5 feet wide, and 4.5 feet deep. It was powered by either sails or four oars. This probably was the kind of boat Peter had.

So Peter got in the boat and rowed out in the water a ways, and then Jesus sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. Peter’s boat becomes the place where Jesus taught. This is not the Temple of Jerusalem, this is not a great religious place, this was teaching from a boat. We are not told what He specifically taught, but we do know from **verse 1**, He was teaching them “the Word of God.”

You cannot help but think of D. L. Moody who took a wooden box to corners in Chicago and stood on it and preached. Then he started a fellowship by borrowing a bar on Sunday morning for services. You can preach the Word of God anywhere.

Again, we don't know exactly what He was teaching; but He was teaching, and it was in this context that these Apostles are called. **They were seeing and learning a very important point that would stay with them the rest of their lives, and that is the way to truly impact people for God by careful and accurate teaching of the Word of God.**

This would be a key lesson for these Apostles to learn.

LESSON #2 – The calling of the Apostles takes place in a context of obeying the Word of God.
5:4-7

When Jesus finished teaching, He told Peter to put out into the deep water and let down his nets to catch fish. The maximum depth for the Sea of Galilee is about 141 feet deep. So Jesus wants Peter to go out to the deep water and put down his nets.

Keep in mind that Luke is putting this together in chronological order, which means Peter had seen Jesus Christ speak to the fever of his mother-in-law and heal her. He was also aware of Him healing people and casting out demons.

So if Jesus is in your boat and He tells you to go out to the deep water and put down the nets, one would think you would say, "Let's go right now." However, from Peter's perspective there are four reasons why this did not appear to be the best idea or best timing:

Reason #1 - Peter was an experienced fisherman. **5:2a**

Peter knew the waters well and he knew that this was not the best time of day to catch fish. He probably thought, Jesus knows a lot about the Word of God, but He doesn't know much about fishing. Jesus was a teacher, not a fisherman. **Peter was a master at fishing, but what he is about to learn is that Jesus is Master over everything.**

Reason #2 - Peter had just washed his nets. **5:2b**

He just got all the gunk and seaweed and mud washed off the nets. These were dragnets which were used at night. These were large nets, and it normally took two boats to handle one. They would go to a spot, let down the net, and then let it sink into the water; then they would move back toward shore and drag the nets collecting fish. The nets would collect seaweed, rocks, mud, and if there were any pop cans or beer cans, they would haul that in too. After it became light, the fishermen would examine their nets and clean the debris out. They had just done that and now Jesus wants them to do that again.

Reason #3 - Peter was a tired fisherman. **5:5a**

Peter had been up all night. The words “worked hard” in Greek means they were tired and exhausted from working hard all night.

There were no motors on these boats, and the only way you got this net in and boat in was by physical labor. The last thing you feel like doing is rowing back out to the deep water.

Reason #4 - Peter knew it was day. **5:5b**

If they hadn't caught anything at night, they probably wouldn't catch something in the middle of the day.

Normally the fish in the Sea of Galilee come near the shore line for food early in the morning, and as the day progressed they moved back into the deep water. The best time to catch fish in the deep water was at evening.

But Peter is about to learn a lesson and that is, **when you obey Jesus Christ, even when circumstances don't appear to be favorable, you end up being prospered and blessed by God.**

According to **verse 5** Peter said, “I will do as you say.” In other words, he would not operate by how he felt or reasoned, he would obey the Word of God. Now Peter is the boss of this boat because he is the one who authorizes the others to let down the nets. Peter was in a fishing partnership with James and John (**v. 10**), but he was in charge of the boat Jesus was in.

There is a key point to see here. Most people govern their lives by how they feel. They govern life by their emotions. If you govern your life by your feelings, you will miss out on many wonderful blessings of God. But if we can learn to govern our lives by the Word of God, we will experience many amazing blessings of God.

According to **verses 6-7**, when they obeyed, they had such immediate success that was so overwhelming, the nets were breaking and the boats were sinking. Apparently the nets started to fray and the catch is so large it actually starts sinking the boat.

They actually had to signal to others for help. More than likely Peter is in the boat with some of his employees, and he signaled to his partners, James and John, to come help (**v. 10**). We know from Mark 1:20 that Peter did have employees.

Peter had never seen anything like this. The greatest success of his business came as a result of obeying the Word of God.

LESSON #3 – The calling of the Apostles takes place by their admitting their own sinfulness and unworthiness. **Luke 5:8-10a**

Peter was a rugged fisherman who had been a hard core sinner (I Pet. 4:3). He was an honest man. When Simon Peter saw what happened, he immediately fell down at Jesus' feet in the boat and said Lord, get away from me because I am a sinful man. Peter is the first person in Luke's gospel to identify Jesus Christ as Lord during His public ministry.

The "for" of **verse 9** indicates that they were overwhelmed by this fish catch and that they were in the presence of Deity. This was true for Peter and for James and for John.

This is interesting, because the thing that actually brings Peter to the realization that Jesus is God is the amazing prosperity Jesus has just given to him in fishing. This is a very rare moment. It is prosperity that causes Peter to fall down before the Lord and say, "I am a sinful man."

Great men and women of God are not self-righteous Pharisees. They are quick to admit their own lack and their own sin. They realize they are not even worthy of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The term "sinner" to a Pharisee is used to refer to one who is distant from God. Luke uses the term as evidence of one who is close to God. This is a key contrasting theme in Luke. It is sinners who are right with God, not self-righteous Pharisees (5:30, 32; 7:34, 39; 15:1-2, 7, 10; 18:13; 19:7).

Let me ask us all some questions here:

1) Have you ever been so convicted of your sinfulness that you have actually asked God to leave you?

Have you ever said to God why in the world don't you give up on me and get away from me?

2) Have you ever been so overwhelmed with God's presence that you fell down on your face or knees before Him?

3) Have you ever even admitted to Jesus Christ that you are a sinful man?

Here is what I can tell us, we will not be greatly used by God for much of anything, until that has happened.

Luke knew that Paul saw himself as the chief of sinners, and what he learned here is that all Apostles saw themselves the same way.

When you talk with shallow people, they want to impress you with how spiritual they are. When you talk to powerful people of God, they will admit how sinful they are.

LESSON #4 – The calling of these Apostles is specifically designed to catch men. **5:10b**

Jesus told Peter don't fear because I am going to use you to catch men. The Greek literally implies you will catch men alive; you will catch living men as opposed to dead fish.

Jesus says I will use sinners who have been dead in sin to rescue other sinners who are dead in sin. In other words, Peter would catch and rescue sinful people through preaching. He would have to follow the Lord and go preach the Word, but as he did, God would give them great success.

LESSON #5 – The calling of the Apostles was immediate and they left everything and followed Him. **5:10b-11**

When they got back to shore, they immediately left everything and followed Him. These men are leaving a very lucrative business. As we pointed out, Mark informs us that these men were successful and wealthy because they had hired servants who worked for them (Mark 1:20). Perhaps this catch of fish underwrote much of the ministry in those early days, or sustained the families of those who worked for these men.

There are some important observations to make from this text:

1) God can do wonderful and powerful things with those who are sinners who admit it and believe in Jesus Christ.

What does it take to become a fisher of men? What does it take to become a servant of Jesus Christ? Well it starts with an honest admission that I am a sinner, not worthy of anything with God. Then it continues by believing in Jesus Christ and acknowledging His Person.

2) Jesus knows exactly what will happen, when it will happen, and where it will happen.

Now in this fishing context we may conclude that sometimes when you are teaching the truth, you may not reel much in one day and may reel in a great deal the next day.

3) Our responsibility is to obey the Word of God.

We must listen to it; learn it; obey it; and communicate it to others.

4) God will produce His results in influencing others when we obey Him.

That is what it takes to be fishers of men – believe in Christ, leave the old behind and follow Him, and you will impact people. Jesus Christ does have the power to transform us, and when we follow Him, we will impact others.