

Luke 5:1-11

Jesus Goes Fishing

Turning to chapter 5, we begin a new section of Luke's Gospel where Jesus calls the disciples to join with Him in His mission to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God (6:12-16). We might characterize this section of the Gospel as "Jesus goes fishing" for those men who will assist Him in catching men to fill the Kingdom of God.

We also see the beginning of the conflict between Jesus and the leaders of the Jews who refuse the call of Jesus to turn from their own self righteousness to the true righteousness in Jesus (5:17, 21, 30, 33; 6:2, 7).

The central focus of the entire section running from 5:1-6:16 is found in 5:32, 38-39. The Jews who refuse the call of Jesus in favor of their own righteousness according to the work of Moses do not catch Jesus by surprise. In fact, He did not come to save those who are righteous. Those who are already well have no need of a physician. Further, no one puts new wine into old wineskins. The old wineskins are the Old Covenant under Moses and the new wine is the gospel of Jesus Christ. While there is continuity between the Old and New Covenant in that Moses and prophets look forward to Jesus as its fulfillment, there is also discontinuity in that the fulfillment has filled full the promises of the Old Covenant. In Jesus, the new wine has come to bring the fullness of joy in that what was required of us to be right with a holy God has been accomplished in Jesus. Those who are satisfied with their own righteousness under the Old Covenant do not want the new wine but instead drink the old wine and declare, "The old is good."

This struggle between those who are sick and realize they have no righteousness in themselves versus those who are satisfied with their own righteousness and have no need for the righteousness which is in Jesus Christ will continue through the whole Gospel down to this very day in our own time. As Jesus declared, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20; Matt. 5:3).

We begin this new section with Jesus once again preaching the Word of God on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret or the Sea of Galilee (5:1). The Sea of Galilee was an important location for Jesus' ministry because as the largest freshwater lake within Israel it was a popular place for the crowds to gather. Luke alone calls the Sea of Galilee the Lake of Genneraret, which is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew "Kinnerret."

Note that Luke reports that the crowds came to hear the "Word of God" as Jesus preached (v. 1) in fulfillment of the necessity of Jesus to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God (cf. 4:43). This doesn't merely mean what it means when a preacher today preaches the "Word of God". We make a distinction between reading the "Word of God" and the preacher's

commentary on God's Word. But the people came to hear Jesus preach and the words which came from His lips were the very "Word of God."

Now what Jesus does next we need to make every effort to notice every detail. First, Jesus could have chosen either boat to enter, but He specifically chooses Simon's boat (v. 3). Be sure to watch carefully how Luke is very concerned to draw our attention to Jesus' special friendship with Simon Peter throughout His Gospel. When Jesus addresses the disciples He usually speaks directly to Peter and Peter is normally portrayed as the spokesman for the disciples. Jesus alone changes Peter's name from Simon (6:14) and Peter is usually chosen for those special moments in Jesus' life as at the transfiguration. But Luke uniquely records "Jesus' prayer in behalf of Peter, that his faith may not fail and that afterward, having recovered, he might strengthen his brothers" (22:31-32; Evans, Luke NIBC, 84). Peter alone assures Jesus, "LORD, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death" (22:33). When Peter denies Jesus and the rooster crows, Luke alone records that unique moment when Jesus turns and looks at Peter (22:61). While Mark recounts how Peter went and wept, Luke alone emphasizes that Peter wept bitterly (22:62). Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry there is something very special about His and Peter's friendship, which will certainly carry over in Luke's second book as Peter takes up a position of leadership in the Jewish mission of the Gospel.

It is from Simon Peter's boat that Jesus sits down and teaches the people the good news of the Kingdom of God (v. 3; cf. 4:43). When he finishes addressing the crowds He then does something so out of character in His purpose for coming to earth. He tells a group of fishermen, again specifically Simon, how to fish (v. 4). And everything He says is wrong to a group of fishermen. First, you don't normally fish during the heat of the day. Second, if you do fish in the early hours of the day, you fish in the shallow end of the lake. It is only at night that you fish in the deep end. But Jesus was craftsman by trade and newly became a teacher of the Word. What does He know about fishing? And who has the audacity to tell a bunch of brawny, exhausted fishermen how to do their trade? Even Peter begins to protest (v. 5). What is amazing here to think about is that even though Peter has heard Jesus preach and seen Him heal many diseases and cast out demons, Peter treats Jesus as just a man, fully human. Peter shows Him respect for sure by calling Him Master (v. 5). He knows there is something special about Jesus – He is a Master Teacher who is perhaps empowered by God – but without thinking too much more. Peter still sees Jesus as merely a man – that is – until what happens next (vv. 6-7). Suddenly, the lives of the fishermen were turned upside down. Nothing like this has ever happened to them before. Peter suddenly falls to his knees, which is both the proper response of a man whose life is invaded by the presence of God Almighty as well as the proper posture in preparation for the worship of the Divine (v. 8). What happened to these fishermen? What struck Peter to the quick? At one moment these

fishermen were merely in the presence of a preacher who is intermeddling with their vocation when suddenly the Holy One of Israel, the LORD God Almighty appeared before them. Peter can't take it – he now knows who he is and more importantly who Jesus is and he cries out to Jesus to “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!” (v. 8). What must it be like to address one moment a mere man and then suddenly become completely naked in the presence of the HOLY? Peter rightly responds to Jesus that He has no business kneeling in the presence of the HOLY God of Heaven and Earth.

We are further told that the rest of those who were with Simon were equally astonished/amazed/taken back by what Jesus just did (v. 9). While James and John are mentioned, the focus remains on Peter (v. 10). What Jesus says next bleeds with mercy and grace – “Do not be afraid!” What? How do you calm the fears of sinful men in the presence of the HOLY God of the universe? Peter had heard Jesus preach. He had seen Jesus heal many including his own mother-in-law. He watched as Jesus cast demons from the possessed. But who can control the seas? Who can bring such life (an enormous catch of fish) out of the death of the depth of the sea? These fishermen knew that nothing like this was possible for a mere man. They had been out all night on the sea. They knew there were no fish in the deep. No one could have done this unless He was in fact God Himself, the HOLY LORD God, in whose presence no sinner can dwell.

But Jesus was fishing for men on Simon's boat. There was a greater catch that Jesus was concerned about on this day. He was sent from the Father to catch Peter, James, and John, the sons of Zebedee (v. 10). Before the foundation of the earth was laid, the Father had the names of Simon, James, and John on His heart and appointed them to become the leaders of the New Israel Jesus had come to call to Himself. They would be the beginning a new school of prophets, the apostles, who would be sent out to catch men for the Kingdom of God (v. 10).

When Jesus called them, they left everything and followed Jesus (v. 11). Who does this? What man among us this morning would simply leave your tradecraft, your family and friends, and more importantly leave trusting in yourself and your own self-righteousness, admit you are poor in spirit, and follow Jesus. Truly, Simon, James, and John were denying themselves, taking up their crosses and following Jesus, to walk with Him, to learn from Him, to worship Him!

But there is far more going on here than first meets the eye. To see the bigger picture of this scene in Luke's Gospel within the larger scope of redemptive history we need to turn to two more passages this morning: the first in **Isaiah (6:1-8)** and the second in John's Gospel (**John 12:36-43**). In **Isaiah 6** we see a similar revelation of God in the presence of sinful man and we see the proper response of a sinner in the presence of the HOLY. But just who did Isaiah see

sitting upon the throne in all His glory? To answer that question, we must turn to **John 12:36-43**. Who did Isaiah see sitting upon the throne of glory? Who was it that was high and lifted up and whose robe filled the temple? Over whom did the seraphim cry out to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory"? John tells us that Isaiah saw Jesus sitting upon His throne in glory as the Holy One of Israel. Further, when Isaiah saw Jesus in **Isaiah 6**, he too, like Simon Peter, responded appropriately to Jesus' Holy presence by falling before Him and crying out, "Woe is me. For I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (**Isa. 6:5**).

And what is this scene in **Isaiah 6** about? It is the call of Isaiah to go forward for Jesus to be a fisher of men as Isaiah takes up the calling to deny Himself, take up His cross and follow Jesus. What we see in Luke's Gospel this morning is not the first time Jesus has appeared before sinners to call them into His service. Just as Jesus called the children of Israel as 12 tribes to Himself so now He is calling not 10, 11 or 13 but 12 disciples as He is forming the foundation of the New Israel who will go into all the world to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God, fishing for those who will be caught into God's net as the elect who will fill the boat, the ark, of God's salvation from the flood of His judgment.

But this scene from Luke's Gospel will take on an even fuller meaning after Jesus has been raised from the dead (see **John 21:1-14**). Jesus will once again go fishing for men as He once again draws Peter into His assured love for him. Though the journey of following Jesus will not be easy, and sometimes even filled with many of our own losses, Jesus will not lose one of His own. Peter will make many mistakes ahead in the Gospel, even denying His LORD three times. But Jesus didn't come to call those who were well and in no need of a physician. He came to call people like us, who are broken by the world and our own sinful ways. He came to call who were not wise by the standards of the world, who were not powerful and mighty, who were not of noble birth. Why? God chose those of us who were weak in the world to shame the strong. Like Peter,

1 Corinthians 1:28 - 2:1 ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Amen!

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