

Luke 4.41-5.11  
*The Master and His Servants*

What are you *devoted* to? What is it in your life that really has a hold on you? That you spend your time thinking about. And if you lost it, or had to give it up, would cause you serious pain?

Well here in this passage we're looking at in Luke 4 and 5, we see a group of men who *gave up everything* and followed Jesus. And it was by *giving up everything*, that they *gained everything*.

You see, that's the cost, and the reward, of following Jesus. It's *only by losing your life* that you can save it. It's *only* by leaving things behind that you can gain true and lasting wealth.

That's just what *Jesus himself says*, isn't it? "*For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.*" And that's really the point of this passage we're looking at today.

### **1. Jesus Teaches the Crowds (4.42-5.3)**

Now, last week we saw in the previous scene that Jesus cast out a *demon* in the synagogue at Capernaum. And then he went to Simon's house and healed *Simon's mother-in-law* of a fever. And after that, the same evening, he healed and cast out demons from a *multitude of people* at Simon's house!

And so when morning came and the sun came up, Luke tells us in 4.42 that Jesus left Simon's house and went to a desolate place to be alone for a while. *But why? .... Well, no doubt* he went there to pray.

Because in the parallel passage in Mark 1.35, Mark does say that Jesus went to this desolate place to pray. And just a little later in Luke, in 5.16, we read that was his regular practice. As great crowds gathered to see him, Luke tells us, "*he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.*"

But on this *particular occasion* when he went to pray, the people found him. Now, we're not sure exactly why they were looking for him. But we at least know they didn't want him to leave.

You see, these people made the *same basic mistake* as the people at Nazareth. Sure, their motives were more pure and they may've been more sincere. But still, what they wanted was for Jesus to stay with them and *not go* anywhere else. So, they had a *fundamental misunderstanding* of his mission.

But as he responds, Jesus makes it clear that he must preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the other towns as well. "For," he says, "*I was sent for this purpose.*"

Now, that's really interesting. Because there are two parts to why Jesus says he was sent. First, there's the *preaching* of the Kingdom. And that's interesting because on the previous day these people saw him performing all these miracles—healing and casting out demons.

And *no doubt* it's the miracles that motivated them all to try to keep him with them. But he tells them his *real purpose* is preaching. So, it's *not* the miracles *in themselves* that Jesus is all about. But it's the *proclamation* of the coming of the Kingdom of God. And the miracles are a revelation of that kingdom.

You see, the primary function the miracles serve is that they show forth the coming of the Kingdom of God. And they do that in two ways. 1. They verify the truth of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom.

And, 2. at the same time, the miracles themselves teach about the kingdom. They show in visible, tangible ways something of the *true nature* of Jesus' mission. Casting out demons, healing, feeding the hungry. Those are all forms of bringing freedom from oppression that's *part and parcel* of Jesus and his ministry.

And then, the second part of what Jesus tells the people in Capernaum he's been sent for is to preach to *other towns* as well. See, just as he told the people at Nazareth, so he tells these people—He's sent to everyone, not just to one people group or location. And so, he makes it clear to them that he must move on.

Now, what Jesus says here to these people should point our minds back once again to the synagogue in Nazareth, where Jesus read and taught

from Isaiah 61: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*” And here in Luke 4.43 Jesus says, “*I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.*”

And, the “good news” Jesus was sent to preach is even further defined here. As it’s specifically good news about *God’s Kingdom*—his rule and authority.

That’s the freedom *from* oppression that Jesus is bringing. And it’s set in *direct opposition* to the kingdom of darkness, which Jesus *just spent* the previous day and night throwing into *mass disarray*.

Joel Green , one of the best commentators on Luke, puts all this really well when he says that the Kingdom of God in the context of Luke’s Gospel “*connotes a new world order where the demonized, the sick, women, and others living on the margins of society are embraced in the redemptive purpose of God.*”

You see, whereas Satan’s kingdom is characterized by oppression and bondage, God’s Kingdom is characterized by *liberation from oppression*. And the coming of the one means the *casting out* of the other.

And so, Luke tells us in verse 44, Jesus did move on. And he was “*preaching in the synagogues of Judea.*” But wait.... I thought he was in Galilee, which is north of Judea, and separated by Samaria in between.

And the next scene where he teaches from Simon’s boat has him at the Lake of Gennesaret, which is just another name for the Sea of Galilee, which is in, *you guessed it*, Galilee.

*So where is Jesus preaching, really?* Well, it was actually somewhat common for Roman authors to refer to the whole land of Palestine as Judea. And that’s probably what Luke’s doing here.

And so, Jesus is still preaching in *Galilee* during this time. But Luke just uses the word “*Judea*” because *Galilee* was part of the *larger region* of Palestine that was sometimes called *Judea*.

Well then in 5.1, just as he did in 4.16, Luke moves from the general to the particular. As he states the general practice of Jesus, that he was going around preaching throughout the region. And then he gives this instance of one particular time when he was preaching by the Lake of Gennesaret.

And again here we see that Jesus' fame's growing more and more. As the crowd's *so great* and *so filled* with *anticipation* that they're, "*pressing in on him to hear the word of God.*"

*This is a preacher's dream!* They're *so eager* to hear him that right out in the open they want him to preach to them about the Kingdom. And so, Jesus doesn't disappoint.

He sees these two boats, and notices that the crews aren't on board. And so he goes into Simon's boat and starts preaching right there! *Imagine that!* All the people are on the shore. And Jesus is in the boat proclaiming the word of God.

## 2. The Master Calls His Servants (5.4-7)

But then in verse 4, we see *why* he was *really* there in the first place. "*And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*"

You see, He's been teaching crowds *all over* the region. People are *clamoring* for his attention—flocking to see and hear him. But here he sets his sights on this *particular* group of men. This small group of fishermen. That's the *real reason* he got into Simon's boat.

And when Jesus tells Simon to go out and let down the nets, Simon responds in verse 5, "*Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.*"

Now, there are really *3 elements* to Simon's response: there's devotion, there's doubt, and then there's obedience.

First, there's devotion. Because notice that Simon calls Jesus "*Master.*" And that shows that Simon at this point already has some loyalty

to Christ. He's already a follower. And by calling Jesus "Master," Simon shows that he sees Jesus as holding superior rank over him.

But then, there's a hint of doubt. Because Simon informs Jesus, "*We toiled all night and caught nothing!*" Now sure, it's *not quite* in your face, but this response does imply some doubt.

*"Jesus, We're professional fishermen, and we've been laboring at our trade all night long without any success. Do you really mean to tell me we should go out again, now in broad daylight, and try to catch something?"*

And then lastly, but most importantly, there's *obedience*. Even though he may've been a little reluctant, Simon obeyed Jesus' word anyway. And so even amidst his doubt, he shows that he has some faith. "*But at your word I will let down the nets.*"

Remember, this is Simon's boat. He's the captain. But here he recognizes Jesus authority and does what his Master says.

And it's only through this act of obedience to the command of Christ that Simon receives his blessing. Because we see in verse 6 that when they let down the nets, they pulled in so many fish that the nets almost broke, and they needed a second boat to carry them all. And even with that, the boats started to sink!

And so, Simon, who already saw Jesus display his authority over demons and human sickness, now understands that Jesus is really the Lord of all creation.

Because he can *even direct fish* where to go. That's the only possible explanation for what just happened! And how striking that must've been for a career fisherman!

And notice that the sign is itself teaching. Because it serves as a picture of what the calling of Peter, James, and John will be. If they follow Jesus, they'll be *catching men*. And if they're obedient, they'll receive his blessing in abundance.

And this sign of the catch of fish is *also* a picture of the Kingdom of God. Because one of the parables of the Kingdom Jesus would tell was the Parable of the Net. *Remember that one?* Matthew 13.47-51:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind.<sup>48</sup> When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.<sup>49</sup> So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous<sup>50</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Now, sure, there's nothing about the last judgment here in Luke 5. But there *is* this whole idea of gathering people into the Kingdom of God being like going fishing. That's why Jesus tells Peter in verse 10, "*from now on you'll be catching men.*"

You see, the proclamation of the gospel is like throwing out a fishing net. And sometimes there's a response, and other times there isn't. But the Lord Jesus is the one who ultimately brings people in. It's simply the calling of his servants to be obedient to their task—to throw out the net and trust and hope for his blessing.

### **3. The Servants Respond to Their Lord (5.8-11)**

And we see in verse 8 that Simon's first response to the miracle is a confession of his sin. "*He fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."*"

Now, Jesus could've chosen anyone. He could've gone to the religious or political elites. *But no.* He chose men who'd acknowledge their sinfulness and their need for forgiveness.

He'll even say as much to the Pharisees just a little later in chapter 5, verses 31-32: "*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*"

You see, the Kingdom of God is characterized by humility, healing, and forgiveness. And those who *presume themselves* to be *righteous*—to

be *healthy*, to be *self-sufficient*—have *no place* in this kingdom Jesus came to proclaim and bring.

That was the case when Jesus was walking the earth in the first century. And it remains the case today. Because what Jesus is looking for in people is a heart of *humility and brokenness*.

And it's really captured by the parable of the *Pharisee and the Tax Collector*, which Jesus tells later in Luke, 18.9-14. You remember that one, don't you? The Pharisee thanks God that he's so righteous and not like the tax collector. But the tax collector stands far off, beats his chest and says "*God be merciful to me, a sinner.*"

And Jesus concludes by saying, "*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*"

And that's *precisely* the character Peter shows when he confesses his sinfulness and unworthiness to Jesus, isn't it?

And so it's *not all that surprising* that Peter himself will later write, in 1 Peter 5.5-7: "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.*

And the question for each of us is: *Which of those people are you?* Are you filled with self-righteousness and pride, convinced you have no need of a physician, of forgiveness, of restoration.

Or are you one who humbly admits and confesses your sinfulness to Jesus and comes to him for healing? Friends, *mark this well*, and *don't forget it*: It's *only* those who humble themselves that will be exalted. *If you're convinced* of your own righteousness and worthiness, then you have no place in God's Kingdom of restoration!

Another thing we should notice here's the progression of names. First, there's the progression of Simon's name. It's certainly *no mere coincidence* that Luke specifically chooses this point to call Simon, "*Simon*

*Peter.*" Up to this point he's just known as Simon. But here in verse 8 Luke says, "*When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' Knees.*"

You see, there's a progression now in Peter's character. He's making the transition—the *conversion*—from being Simon, the sinful fisherman from Galilee, to being Peter, the *Rock*—with a *new identity* given by Jesus himself. And that starts here as he recognizes his own sinfulness and Jesus' greatness.

And we also see this progression in Peter's character in the title he gives to Jesus. Because here in verse 8, instead of calling Jesus "Master" like in verse 5, Peter calls him "Lord." And so he moves from referring to Jesus simply as his superior, to confessing him as his Lord.

And Jesus accepted that title. And just like Gabriel did with Zechariah and Mary in chapter 1, he *reassures* Peter of God's favor toward him. Notice, he doesn't say, "*Don't beat yourself up. You're really not all that bad of a guy.*" No. He just tells him, "*Don't be afraid.*"

Jesus, the Lord, receives sinful Peter in his grace.

*You're a sinner, Peter. I know. I know everything you've done. And you'll continue to sin. But I'm here because I've already set my loving favor upon you. And I've chosen you for a great task. And to confound the wisdom of the world, I'm going to use you to build my church. From now on you'll be catching people instead of fish.*

And so, Jesus' ministry of restoration is now seen to stretch into yet another area. We've seen him release people from demonic oppression and physical sickness. And now here he restores a sinner to a place of forgiveness.

And then, after Jesus told Peter, James, and John what their new calling was—to catch people for God's Kingdom—they *left everything* and followed him! And they did it *without hesitation*.

Now, *Think about that....*These guys are career fishermen. And they just had the biggest catch of fish they could've ever imagined!

If you've ever seen that show, "*The Deadliest Catch*" on the Discovery Channel, then you know something of what a sacrifice it must've been for these guys to leave this catch of fish behind.

They had two boats *entirely full* of these fish. So full the boats even began to sink! It's the *catch of their lives*! They'd have brought in a *load* of money. But they left it all behind, and *followed Jesus*. You see, the catch itself was *infinitely less important* than what it said about Jesus.

And the response of Peter and the others *really contrasts* with much of what we've seen up to this point, *doesn't it?* Because they're motivated to *radical action*, leaving everything and following Jesus.

Other than Peter's mother-in-law, people have just been listening to Jesus with amazement, or opposing him. And here Peter, James, and John are all amazed. But their amazement leads them to leave behind *everything* they had and follow Christ.

That's the cost of discipleship. When you're confronted with the reality of *who Jesus is*, you can't just go about life as though everything's the same—*chasing after* the American dream like everyone else.

Because *if* you're a Christian—if you claim to be a follower of Jesus—it's *not enough* to just be a spectator. To just sit around in wonder as if Christianity's some form of spiritualized entertainment.

Sure, as I said last week, there's a place for sitting in awe of Jesus. But Christ's calling for each of us is to get up, *leave things behind*, and *follow him*.

And that *doesn't necessarily mean* you have to be out preaching on the streets or anything like that. It could mean something as simple as giving up watching a few TV shows in order to spend longer hours in praying for people. Or taking the time to develop a close friendship with someone who really needs your companionship.

You see, *Christ's calling* for us to leave things behind and follow him *won't always* look the same. It's different for each one of us depending on

our unique gifts, personalities, and stages in life. But the *essential thing* is that you do follow, and that you do it *without looking back*.

Now, if you're someone who pays attention to the church calendar, you know that the season of Lent just began. And whether you observe Lent or not—it's a matter of Christian liberty, so you're free to or not—the basic principle behind it is something we should follow in our lives.

And that principle's that the way of discipleship is a hard, narrow path. It's the way of *repentance, self-sacrifice, and suffering*. And that's not just something that happens once and then you're done. But it's something that's ongoing—*throughout our lives*.

And the way of discipleship is also at the same time—as for Peter, James, & John—a way of joy and celebration. Jesus even said “*My yoke is easy and my burden is light.*” But he also said, “*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.*”

That's the great paradox of the Christian life, *isn't it?* As amidst the constant repentance and struggle, there's the joy and hope of the resurrection. There's the new life we have in Christ, even as we're crucified with him and have fellowship in his sufferings.

And as we continue on in this world, we have to ever keep our eyes focused on the *end goal of full resurrection life*, when Christ will return to make all things new —the hope that was *made sure* by the first Easter morning.

That's the only way we can ever emulate the example of Peter and the other apostles—forsaking all to follow Jesus.