

# TRINITY

BIBLE CHURCH DALLAS

The Sermon

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Luke 5:1-11

"Fishers of Men"

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TRANSCRIPT

So, all right, take God's Word, Luke chapter 5, we're in verses 1 through 11. The title of this is "Fishers of Men," Luke 5. I want to begin reading in verse 1, I trust you have your Bible, it's open. You can follow along. Feel free to mark up your bible, jot notes in the margin.

"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; 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. 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. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, '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.' When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 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. But when Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, 'Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 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.' When they had

brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him." This is the reading of God's Word, let us go to Him in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we love this passage. It is so easy for us to put ourselves into the place of Peter and to identify with Peter. Lord, I pray that today we would hear Your strong call to follow You. I pray that Your Holy Spirit will be working strongly within our hearts and souls this day and be in our midst, that there would be a maximum rate of return from our study of this passage. So, Father, we pray this in the name of Christ. Amen. [End]

In these verses, Jesus calls His disciples to follow Him and to become fishers of men. He calls them to leave behind their former vocation, just leave it all behind – leave the security of their job, leave behind their home, leave behind their family, leave behind the familiar and to step out into the unknown and to follow Him. They have no idea where this will take them. They had no idea what lies ahead. They have no idea, really, what this will cost them. All they know is He has issued the call to follow Him; and follow Him, they must.

Jesus only tells them two things here, two things. Number one, "Follow Me. You don't need to know where, you don't need to know how, you just need to know Me. Follow Me." And then, second, "You will become fishers of men. If you're following Me, you will become fishers of men." And so this call issued by Jesus is to prepare them for a lifetime of service and ministry.

To become fishers of men, it will require that they give up the safety and security of where they live and where they work. It will require that they launch out into the open seas of this world and fish for the souls of perishing men. It will require that they face the storms that are out upon the sea of this world and the turbulence. They must follow Christ unconditionally.

Now, this scene occurs at the beginning of the second year of Jesus' public ministry. Luke has skipped over most of the first year of Jesus' public

ministry; the gospel of John gives us that information. And what you need to know is Jesus has already called many of His disciples to salvation. What we read here is not a call to salvation, it is a call to be trained for ministry for the rest of your life. He has already called John and Andrew and Peter and James and Philip and Nathaniel into saving faith. Matthew is still outside the fold and has not yet been called to leave his tax booth to come follow Christ.

This is actually the second call. They've already been called to salvation. This is now the second call, we could say, to service, to be trained. It's the call to travel with Christ. It is the called to be trained by Him, to be taught by Him, and to be tested by Him. And one day Jesus will turn the reigns of the ministry over entirely to them. And so there's two years now that Jesus has to train them and to prepare them to become fishers of men. And, oh, Peter will become a fisher of man. He'll stand up on the Day of Pentecost and preach the gospel and three thousand souls will be caught in the nets.

So, let's walk through this passage. I love this passage. I want you to note, first, "the crowd" in the first three verses. It begins, "Now it happened" - which means He's still in Galilee, He's still preaching - "that while the crowds was pressing around Him." As long as He was in Galilee, the crowd is always pressing around Him.

The crowd here represents a large, vast multitude of people. This isn't a little small group Bible study, this is an enormous throng of people and they're pressing around Him. The word literally means "surrounding Him and hemming Him in such that He can't escape them." They are anticipating more miracles, and so people are flooding out of towns and villages.

But notice what Luke chooses to emphasize in listening to the word of God. There's no mention of the miracles here. There is no mention of exorcisms here. What Luke wants us to have myopic vision upon and to see this scene as through a keyhole with blinders on so that we don't see anything else, he wants us to see the ministry of the word of God that is going forward because this is the tip of this spear of Jesus' public ministry.

And not only was He preaching the word, it says here they're listening to the word. They're hanging on His every word. They are drinking it in. It is the message of the good news, the salvation for those who will enter into the kingdom of God. And the preaching of Jesus was powerful. It was penetrating. It was provocative. They were captivated by the preaching of Jesus.

And we read, "He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret." That is the Sea of Galilee, this large freshwater lake really. It's a large lake. And interestingly enough, it's some 700 feet below sea level. When you stand on the western side on a huge cliff, it's just like straight down into the basin of the lake of Gennesaret.

And in verse 2, as Jesus is standing by the lake of Gennesaret and just surrounded by vast, vast, vast numbers of people, "He saw two boats" – now these two boats are not rowboats, these are fishing boats with sails – "lying at the edge of the lake," probably anchored in the shallows where they could get out of boat and easily just walk on to dry land.

"And so as the fishermen had gotten out them" – those two fishermen are Peter and Andrew and James and John – "and were washing their nets." The reason they're washing their nets in the middle of the day is because they've been out all night fishing. And after you fish, you come in and you mend your nets and you wash your nets and then you let your nets dry out for the next journey, and so this is the scene.

And in verse 3, "He" – Jesus – "got into one of the boats." He stepped into it, probably waded out a very short distance, and got into the boat. And this boat will serve as a floating pulpit for Him. This boat will serve as a platform from which He will speak to this large crowd.

"And the boat" - it says - "was Simon's." You see that in verse 3. Jesus is about to step not just into Simon's boat, He's about the step into Simon's life. This is very intentional. He has singled out Simon. He could have gotten into the other boat, but every team needs a quarterback, and Peter is going to be the point man. Peter's just a natural leader. He has all of the characteristics and qualities of a swashbuckling, aggressive leader who one day will be tempered by the Lord and for all these strengths to be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit of God.

Simon has already been converted. That's in John 1:4-42. You remember Andrew went and got his brother Simon and brought him to the Lord, and it was at that point Simon was converted, and God changed his name from Simon to Peter indicating the change that had taken place in his conversion. So this is not the first time He's met Simon.

"And Jesus asked Simon to put out a little way from the land." I think we can suppose from this, so that as Jesus speaks, the crowd will be able to hear Him better because a voice travels over calm water very loud, or loudly. "And He" - Jesus - "sat down." That's not to get rest, that is to assume the posture of authority of a teacher. This is what Jesus did in Matthew 5:1 when He preached the Sermon on the Mount. What did He do? He sat down. Everyone else was standing.

"And so Jesus sat down" - because as verse 3 continues - "and began teaching the people." This is the second time in three verses that Luke has drawn our attention to the teaching and preaching ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was what He was constantly doing. He was teaching the people, instructing the people from the boat.

This was the greatest thing Jesus could do for these people, anything else would have been secondary. Even healing them or casting out demons, that would have been of secondary importance. There was only one primary importance in the ministry of Jesus leading up to the cross, which would be supreme, but it was the teaching and preaching of the word of God, because no one can be saved without knowing the word of God, and no can be

sanctified apart from knowing of word of God. No one could be made strong apart from knowing word of God. Our Christian lives will never grow beyond our intake of the word God.

And so Jesus is, really, carrying out what the Puritans referred to as the primary means of grace, the primary means by which the saving and sanctifying grace of God would flow into the hearts of people. It would flow through the mouth of the preacher as he has the word of God before him. So that's the crowd. That's a circumstance.

So notice, second, in verse 4, "the command." In verse 4, "When He" - Jesus - "had finished speaking, He said to Simon," - who's the natural leader. He's the natural leader of the fishing business, he will be the leader in the twelve disciples and the twelve apostles - "He said to Simon, ' Put out into the deep water. Put her back out there, back into deep,' - because it is in deep that is where the fish are, away from shore - 'and let down your nets for a catch.'"

Now this is intended to be a test, a test of Simon's submission to Christ, a test of his obedience to Christ, because from a human perspective, this makes no sense. Fishermen fish at night, not during the day. And here is a carpenter telling a professional fisherman how to fish. This isn't sitting well, and their pride must have been telling them, and Simon's pride certainly, "Master, You stick to the preaching, we've got the fishing covered, we know fishing. You know the word, we know the fish."

But they had forgotten a very important truth, and Peter had forgotten a very important truth, and it is this - and all of us need to hear this today - that the Lordship of Christ is over all of life, not just over ministry. It is over your marriage. It is your parenting. It is over your career. It is over relationships. It is over your finances. It's not just over Sunday school, it is not over outreach, it is over every single aspect of your life. There is no step you will ever take in life, no breath you ever will take in that is outside of the lordship of Jesus Christ. That needs to be said, and that needs to be heard.

So this leads to verse 5, "the concession." Simon answered." Simon's always answering. Someone has well said he always needs an after-foot mint. Never slow to speak. But that's a mark of a leader. He's not playing defense. He's not passive. He is out there.

"Simon answered and said, 'Master.'" Now, this is not the word for "Lord," *Kurios*. This is a different word and it is, really, a respectful title.

"Commander, chief, leader, we worked hard all night." I mean, Simon's already tapping the brakes. "This plan is not going to work. We worked hardest all night."

Those two words, "worked hard," one word in the original language, and it means to toil to the point of exhaustion, to a point you have nothing left to give, that you're weary, you are without strength. They had been without sleep. They are just completely exhausted. They are drained.

He said, "We worked hard all night" - and the reason they worked all night is because of the next three words - "and caught nothing." They're not coming back empty-handed. They're not going to come back with empty nets and an empty boat, but that's exactly what happened. But the longer they were out there and the longer they were fishing and the longer they caught nothing, the longer they were determined, "We're going to wait this out until we catch fish."

"Caught nothing, zero. This is embarrassing to admit. We struck out." He says, "But I will do as You say." It's a concession. Isn't going to work. I'll do You say, so You'll know I'm right." That's what's going on here. "I'll do as You say." Now, that's the wisest thing Simon has said to this point, "I will do as You say and let down the nets. But nothing's going to happen. We didn't catch anything at night when the fish were out feeding. We're not going to catch anything with the blazing hot sun beating down on the surface of the lake. The fish are all going to go hide someplace."

But Peter reluctantly follows the Lord's command, but his heart is half in, half out. He appears to be complying only half-heartedly, just going to go through the motions. And it's important for us to learn a lesson here. It's more than just obedience that the Lord requires from you and me, it is a wholehearted obedience. In fact, the heart is more important than the action. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." "Out of the heart come the issues of life."

So, Peter's actions were good, but his part was very reluctant. And we need to learn that and be reminded that God looks not only at the action of what we do, but also the attitude behind the action. I mean, it's possible to write out a check and give it to the church or some ministry, but it is almost like they're sticky on your fingers and you just can't let the check go until you finally do it, but your heart's not in it. That doesn't please the Lord. He looks beyond the action, He looks deeper into the heart.

So, this leads us to verse 6, "the catch." Verse 6, "When" – and that gives the idea as soon as they put out into the deep and as soon they dropped the nets, like that very moment – "when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish." It was an enormous quantity of fish, as we shall soon discover. These are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of fish.

Later in John chapter 21, after the resurrection of Christ and Jesus says, "Come back here to the Sea of Galilee," and they go back out and they fish one more time, John is very careful to record that they caught 153 fish, the exact number. Well, that was nothing compared to this.

"So they enclosed in the nets a great quantity of fish," – They were not prepared for this. They have never caught fish like this before. This is unprecedented. This is uncharted waters – "and their nets began to break," just under the sheer weight of the fish. These nets have never had this much weight to be pressing down upon them. This is a dramatic miracle of divine intervention, a display of Jesus' sovereign authority over all the works of His hands.

Listen, this didn't just happen that hundreds and hundreds of fish would jump into the net at one time the moment they let the net down after they had fished for hours and hours through the night and caught nothing. No, this was a display of divine power over the fish. And, listen, this was more than Jesus knowing where the fish were, okay? This was Jesus controlling the fish and sovereignly ordaining that they would swim into this net at this very moment. Of course, He did. Jesus made the lake. He made the fish. He controls the fish. He's having more trouble with Peter than with the fish. The fish are very responsive. There's no "but" with the fish.

"So they signaled." They (meaning Peter and Andrew) signaled. And that word means to make a sign by nodding your head or gesturing with your hands. However, they did this bodily. "They signaled to their partners" – that would be James and John who were in the other boat – "for them to come and help them." This is more than they can handle. They can't get their arms around this. They cannot get all these fish into their, rather, large boat.

"And they" – James and John – "came and filled both of the boats, so they began to sink." Never have they experienced anything like this before. What a lesson this was for Simon. What lesson is this for you and for me. Obedience honors God, and God honors obedience.

The lesson was that these disciples must always follow the direction of the Lord. This is like a little pre-kindergarten life lesson for them to learn, because after Jesus will ascend back to heaven and they will be carrying out the ministry in the book of Acts against apostate Israel and the dominance of the Roman Empire, they're going to need to know what it is to follow directions and to do God's work, God way, if they are to have God blessing. That's what's going on here. And you and I need to remember this: if Christ commands us to do something, we must do it wholeheartedly.

So I don't know what there is on your plate this morning that God has been pressing upon your mind something that you need to do. As you've read the Scripture, it has become very pointed and very clear that "this is something that I must do," don't drag your feet. Delayed obedience is no obedience. God delights in immediate obedience.

Well, this leads us to verse 8, "the conviction." This miracle had no small effect upon Simon. And so in verse 8, we read, "But when Simon Peter saw that," - well, of course, he saw it; his eyes must have popped out of his head - "he fell down." That means He was so overwhelmed by what He has observed that he just collapses. He's gone limp. He is so weakened by what this display, really, of divine glory, that "he fell down at the feet of Jesus." And as Spurgeon has said, "Better to be at the feet of Jesus than standing anyplace else." This is the best place to be: at the feet of Jesus. And for Simon, it is an expression of his submission and his adoration.

And notice what he says, "saying," "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." Note that he changes from Master to Lord. In fact, the "Lord" is used twice here. No longer addressing Jesus with the respectable title Master, Leader, Chief Commander of the posse: "You're God. You're God in human flesh. You are Lord. You have authority and power over all creation. You have authority and power over me. You have authority over the fish. You have authority and power over everything." And as the light of Christ's deity and holiness and awesomeness has come shining through in this miracle, it is the Light that has exposed the dirt and Peter.

You see, the closer you draw to the Lord, the more aware you will become of your imperfections and blemishes. It's the one who's furthest away from the Lord who is oblivious to their spiritual apathy and lukewarmness. But the one who draws the closest to the light becomes most painfully aware of their own sin. It's not a sign that they're unconverted, it's a sign actually that are aware of their sin and their need for grace.

It's what happened to Isaiah, isn't it? "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up, train of His robe filling the temple, the

seraphim crying out, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. Heaven and earth is full of His glory.' And the thresholds of the palace began to shake." What was Isaiah's response? "I'm going to go on Christian television because I had a trip to heaven." No. "Woe is me. I'm ruined. I am a man of unclean lips."

No, Isaiah, that's the best thing you have going for you is your lips. You're a prophet. "I'm a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of glory." That was Isaiah's experience, and that's exactly the experience here of Peter. John would have it on the island of Patmos in Revelation 1 when he's given the vision of the glorified Christ, and it says that "he fell at His feet as a dead man," which simply means he went unconscious, he fainted in the immediate presence of the Holy One.

So he says, "Go away from me, Lord. This is more than I can bear. You are exposing so much inside of me, I can't bear this anymore, for I'm a sinful man. Lord, You're too holy, and I am too sinful." And what was this sin? Well, it's half-heartedness to obey the Lord when He said, "Put out to the deep and cast the nets while you were dragging your feet reluctantly thinking you know more than I know."

No, that was the sin. It was self-elevation and the self-exaltation of Peter's own flesh above the clear, simple command of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in this moment Peter sees, "I'm wrong, Jesus is right. I am a stinking wretch, that's what I am." People who are unholy always feel uncomfortable in the presence of the Holy One of God. And you know what? Rightly so.

So, verse 9, "For amazement had seized him." The word "amazement" means wonder had ceased him. The word "seized" means to be surrounded by something, to be encompassed by something such that you cannot escape. That's what the word means. So this sense of amazement, he couldn't get over it. It wasn't a passing emotion, it was stunning, "For amazement had seized him and all His companions."

Now, his companions are differentiated from James and John who are mentioned later, so there must have been some helpers in the business, not the owners of the boats, but some other men to help out. Everyone there in those two boats were, quite frankly, shocked out of their mind, it says here, "because of the catch of fish which were taken."

I mean, here's the hardcore evidence right in front of them: "So many fish; we have two submerged, sunk boats. This wasn't some vision or dream and it's come and gone and we can't quite verify what all was just made known. No, here are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of fish. Here are broken nets. Here are submerged boats that are sunk now. No, it's as plain as a plain can be, "because of the catch of a fish which were taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon."

I trust that in our spiritual lives that we will never get over the astonishment and the amazement and the wonder of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done and what He is doing and what He will do. I trust that we will always be seized with amazement that "God has saved me, that got caught me out in the deep waters, that God has used me in some small way to try to reach others who are out in deep water, that God would let me be in the same boat with Him, with His Son Jesus Christ."

I pray that we never become lukewarm about this, that we never become so cognitive and so intellectual and so sterile in our thinking that it doesn't grip our hearts. We need to always be like what we read here in verse 9. How about you? Is there a sense of wonder and amazement at what God has done in your life? I mean, where would you be if He had not caught you? What would be doing this morning?

Next, I want you to see "the commission" at the end of verse 10, number six, "the commission." And this should be an encouragement because Peter is a long way from perfect. He's just confessed his sin. You would think the Lord might put him on the bench for several months or a couple years "until

you get it together, Peter." But instead, the Lord so graciously immediately commissions him into the work. You see, Peter's confession of sin is not a hindrance to being used, it is a prerequisite to be used.

And so we read in the middle of verse 10, "And Jesus said to Simon," – and again, all this is being directed to Simon because, "Simon, you're going to the flagpole. I mean, Simon you're going to be the point man. Simon, you've got to get this."

"And Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not fear.'" Why would He say that? Because that's exactly what Peter was filled with – terror, even dread. This word for "fear," *phobeō*, it comes into our English language as "phobia." "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." Wow. "You will be taking captive men with the net of the gospel of the kingdom of God, men who are drowning in their sin, men who are perishing out in the sea of this world, men who are going under, being capsized, who are going down for the last time eternally. Peter, you are going to be catching men. You will be fishing for men the rest of your life."

This is, in a sense, Peter's, and the others there that day, something of a commission into full-time ministry. Jesus is saying to Peter, "You will be launching out into the deep waters of this world. You will be met with storms and waves of persecution. You'll be tempted to retreat, to go back to the shore. Keep on sailing into the unknown and casting your net. Just as I have commanded fish to swim into that net, so I, the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, will call all of My elect into the net of salvation." If He can control the fish, He can control the elect, and they will be brought to faith in Jesus Christ no matter what resistance they may put up.

How gracious of Christ to immediately not send Peter back to the locker room but put him out on the field and give him this prophecy, this fore-view of what lies ahead. What a joy, what a privilege to lead people to faith in Christ. Another quote from Spurgeon flashes into my mind. He said, "I would rather win one soul to Christ than to unpick all the theological mysteries of the Bible." That must be our priority. Our goal is for souls.

Finally, verse 11, "the commitment." The call has been issued, it must be answered. So, verse 11, "When they had brought their boats to land," - indicating they were just not in the shallows, they actually were out in the deeps; and so now as they bring their boats to the land - and somehow, some way, they've got their boats up; they've probably bailed water out of it - the next three words - "they left everything."

They left their boats. They left their nets. They left their homes. They left their income. They left their family. They left their friends. They left their security. They left their comfort zone. They left their past. They just left everything and followed Him, step for step, stride for stride. "Whatever hits You is going to splatter on us. We're going to follow You," not knowing where it would take them.

Today, if I was interviewing someone for a church position ministry, at this point they would want to know, "So what guarantee can you give me for my retirement, and what guarantee can you give for vacation, and what guarantee can you give me for et cetera, et cetera?" They just signed their life over. "Whatever it takes, that's what we're going to do."

They followed Him not knowing what lies ahead, not knowing what they will face, not knowing what will be required of them, and not knowing how this will end. All they knew is that Jesus is their Master and Jesus their Lord, and they must follow Him.

This is where you and I are this morning. This could not be any more personal for every one of us in this room. You do not know what the future holds, you just know who holds the future. You follow Him. And if you follow Him, you will be fishing for men. It may start with your own children. It might start your grandchildren. It may extend to in-laws. It may extend to next-door neighbors and friends. It may extend to work associates. It may extend to strangers that you meet. But as you follow Jesus, you will always be fishing for the souls of men. And if you're not fishing, He might

as well just take you home because that is our business. We're not the keepers, as one man has said, of the aquarium, we are the fishers of men.

Has the Lord caught you out in the deep waters of this world? Has the Lord brought you into His boat? If you've never been caught by the Lord, then I would urge you to call upon His name this very moment and commit your life to Him and become a follower of Jesus Christ. There is no greater life that anyone could live than following Jesus Christ every day of your life. So if you've never stepped out of the world, I call you today to step into His boat and to follow Christ, and one day He will take you all the way to heaven to the Father's throne.

[Prayer] Father, thank You for this passage. Help us to learn the lessons from this passage. Help us to follow You with unwavering faith, and help us be fishers of men to take as many souls to heaven with us as we possibly can. We pray this in His matchless name. Amen. [End]

For the closing benediction, the last verse in 2 Corinthians chapter 13 would be my desire for you. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." God bless you.