

Luke 5:1-11

"Fishers of Men"

June 30, 2024

1. In Matthew chapter 21, verses 28-31, Jesus asked a question of the chief priests and the elders of the people
 - a. As he so often did, he framed this question in the form of a parable, as he said to them...
 - i. ²⁸"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' ²⁹And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?"
 - ii. Jesus was using this parable to explain to the religious leaders that the Kingdom of God was not for those who only OUTWARDLY obeyed the commands of God
 1. It didn't matter how long and eloquent your prayers were
 2. It didn't matter if you tithed a tenth of your mint and dill and cumin
 3. It didn't matter if you strictly observed all 613 of the laws prescribed by the Pharisees of those days
 - a. Jesus told these religious leaders that the tax collectors and the prostitutes would enter the Kingdom before they did
 - i. For even though they rejected God at first, they eventually turned and did as He commanded
 1. As we'll see this morning, this was the Apostle Peter's story
 2. And for many of us, it is our story as well
2. Our passage this morning begins in Luke chapter 5, verse 1...
 - a. ¹On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret,
 - i. The lake of Gennesaret had many names in the Scriptures
 1. In Numbers 34, as God was giving Moses the boundaries of the Promised Land, he said to Moses in verse 11...
 - a. ¹¹And the border shall go down and reach to the shoulder of the Sea of Chinnereth on the east, and it shall go down to the Jordan, and its limit shall be the Salt Sea.
 - i. The Sea of Chinnereth that God was referring to was the lake of Gennesaret
 2. In John 6, just before Jesus feeds the five thousand with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish, John writes that,
 - a. ¹...Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.
 - i. The Sea of Galilee, or the Sea of Tiberius, was also known as the lake of Gennesaret
 3. In his commentary on Luke 5, John Gill writes that...
 - a. "The Jews say (d), that, 'The holy, blessed God created seven seas, but He chose none of them all, except for the sea of Gennesaret.' And indeed," Gill says, "it was a place chosen by Christ, and honored, and made famous by him, by his preaching at it, his miracles upon it, and showing himself there after his resurrection."
 - i. The plains that surrounded the Sea o Gennesaret were said to be some of the most fertile lands in all of the region

1. As we'll see throughout the Gospels, Jesus would return to the shores of this precious sea many times throughout his ministry
 - a. Maybe, just as the lands around the sea were known for their rich and fertile soil, Jesus was also seeking to find rich and fertile soil in the peoples hearts
 - i. A soil that would receive the Word of God with joy, and that would bear much fruit
- b. So Jesus was at the lake of Gennesaret, proclaiming the Word of God, and there was a great crowd pressing in on him
 - i. So verses 2 and 3 tell us...
 1. *²and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*
 - ii. As we'll see in just a moment, one of these boats belonged to Simon and his brother Andrew
 1. And the other boat belonged to James and John, the sons of Zebedee
 - a. These 4 men had been out on the lake fishing, all night long
 - i. And all they had to show for their efforts was a bunch of dirty nets
 1. We have to remember, these guys were not just out on a guy's night, having a little fun on a fishing trip
 2. For these men, fishing was their livelihood... it was how they provided for themselves and their families
 - ii. Sometimes when I'm heading to work in the morning, I'll drive by the glass factory on the north side of Sapulpa, and I'll see a bunch of men and women leaving the factory and heading to their cars in the parking lot across the street
 1. These are the night shift workers
 2. While my day is just starting, they've already put in a long night of hard labor, and they're ready to go home and go to bed!
 - iii. Just imagine if, after a long and dirty night of hard labor, their foreman comes to them and says, "Sorry fellas, no one gets paid for those hours. Come back tomorrow night and try again."
 1. Needless to say, they would be pretty discouraged, wouldn't they?
 - a. This was the life of a fisherman in the first century
 - i. Some nights you might come away with a great catch
 - ii. But others, like this time, you would work and labor all night long, and your boats would be empty
 2. So Simon... exhausted, probably hungry and ready to go home and go to bed, was trying to wrap things up so he could leave
 - a. And then Jesus shows up and starts preaching, and great crowds surround him
 - i. I don't know what Peter was thinking in that moment, but I know what I would be thinking... "Boys, lets get these nets washed up quick so we can get out of here!"

3. But I love how Luke recounts what happens next
 - a. Luke says that Jesus simply got into Simon's boat, and then he ASKED him to put out a little from the land
 - i. He didn't command Simon to get back into the boat
 - ii. He didn't order him to stop cleaning his net
 1. He just asked Simon...
 - a. "Hey, Simon, can we move your boat away from the shore a little bit?"
 2. This word that Luke uses for "asked," has a deeper meaning than just a casual question from one stranger to another
 - a. It is actually used in reference to a special request, made from a preferred position, one that is based upon an intimate relationship
4. Think back to what we've talked about in previous sermons from Luke
 - a. When we piece together the accounts from the four Gospels in the Scriptures, we find in John's Gospel that Peter had already become well-acquainted with Jesus, hadn't he?
 - i. Andrew, Peter's brother, had already brought Peter to meet the Messiah
 1. It's likely that Peter was with Jesus at the wedding at Cana, where he saw Jesus turn the water into wine
 2. It's likely that Peter was with Jesus when he went into the Temple in Jerusalem and overturned the tables of the money-changers, and drove the merchants out with a homemade whip
 - b. We saw just a few weeks ago that it was Peter's house in Capernaum that Jesus went to, and there he healed Simon's mother-in-law, and then he also healed all who were brought to him that night with various diseases and demons
 - i. What we see in the Scriptures is that Jesus was already pursuing a deeper relationship with Simon Peter
 1. But Simon Peter was not yet sold on who Jesus TRULY was
 - a. Like the parable we heard at the beginning of the sermon, Peter was like the son whose dad told him to go out and work in the vineyard, but initially said "No."
 - b. But Jesus had other plans for this hard-headed fisherman
- c. And so in verse 4, we read...
 - i. *⁴And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*
 1. We have to sympathize a little with Peter's response, right?
 - a. Again, Peter was exhausted and discouraged
 - i. He had complied with his friends request when Jesus asked him to put his boat out a ways from the shore so he could preach to Word
 1. But now Jesus was telling him to go back out and do some more fishing??
 - ii. It's not hard to imagine some frustration, maybe even some irritation, in Peter's voice, as he said in verse 5

1. ⁵And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."
 - a. Peter was a realist
 - i. He knew that the opportune time for catching fish was at night
 - ii. He knew that they'd already worked hard, and had come away with nothing
 - b. But he also knew that his friend Jesus was no ordinary man
 - i. He had seen him do many signs and wonders already
 - ii. He had just heard him preach the word of God with authority
 - c. And so he says to him "MASTER, because you say so, I'll do it"
- d. And verses 6-7 say,
 - i. ⁶And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷They 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.
 1. Incredible!!
 - a. I'm sure many of you have seen footage of deep sea commercial fishing boats, where they have a big crane on the boat that hoists up a huge net full of fish, and then dumps it all on the deck
 - i. For those big boats and their fancy equipment, that's just another days work
 - b. But for Simon and the guys with him in their boat, this was an undeniable miracle from God
 - i. This wasn't the right time of the day to catch fish
 - ii. They'd already fished all night long and had caught ZERO fish
 1. But now, they let down their nets and they immediately catch so many fish that the boat begins to sink?
 - a. And not just Simon's boat, but James and John's boat as well?!
 - iii. Simon had already seen Jesus perform many signs and wonders, but this was the first time Simon had been on the receiving end of the power of God
 1. And he was utterly overwhelmed by the realization of who was standing in the boat with him
- e. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."
 - i. Friends, this was not the way people reacted when they encountered just an ordinary rabbi
 1. This was the same kind of response that Isaiah had when he saw the Lord sitting upon his throne and he cried out,
 - a. *"Woe is me! For I am lost; 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!"*
 2. This was the same kind of response that Job had after God had spoken to him from the whirlwind, and Job said,

- a. ⁵I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;
⁶therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

ii. Peter’s eyes were finally being opened

1. He had known that Jesus was a great teacher
2. He had known that Jesus could perform some amazing miracles
3. But now, he began to see that Jesus was LORD
 - a. This title of “Lord” in verse 8 is the Greek word Kurios (koo-ree-oss)
 - i. It is a title given to one who exercises absolute ownership rights over another
 - ii. It is the title of a sovereign king
 - iii. It is the title of one who is SUPREME in authority
4. And as Peter begins to see Jesus as Lord, he also begins to see his own depravity
 - a. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”
 - i. I wonder, have any of us ever been so overwhelmed by the holiness of God, and by the depth of our own sin, that we have felt the same things that Peter felt on that boat?
 1. If you are a follower of Christ, you certainly have had moments of repentance...
 - a. Times where you have mourned over the sin in your own life...
 - b. Times when you were pleading to the Lord for forgiveness...
 - c. Times when you knew that you had spurned the grace of our great God
 2. But have we ever come so face-to-face with God and with ourselves that we fell to our knees and cried out, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, or a sinful woman”?
 - ii. I have to say that I have not ever had such a “fear of the Lord” moment
 1. We pray often for God’s peace, and His comfort, and His grace
 - a. But I wonder how different our lives might look if we prayed for more FEAR of who He is?

f. Luke writes in verse 9 that Peter expresses such fear...

- i. ⁹For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,
¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.
 1. Astonished is not a very good translation of what Luke originally wrote
 - a. The word that Luke used actually comes from an old Sanskrit word from a thousand years before the time of Christ
 - b. It is the picture of a man who is completely stunned by what he has seen...
 - i. One who is absolutely paralyzed with both awe, and terror
 1. Simon...
 2. The men who were with him in the boat...
 3. James and John...
 - ii. All of them were dumbfounded with what they had just experienced
 - c. I can just picture Jesus in this moment, with a grin on his face, as he says to Simon... “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”
 - i. We see in these words the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus
 1. He didn’t ask Peter and the boys if they wanted to follow him

2. He didn't just throw it out there and say "Hey, if you're interested, you can come follow me."
3. He said, "Don't be afraid, Simon... FROM NOW ON you WILL be catching men."
- ii. The days of Simon's wavering between fishing and discipleship were over
 1. Peter had hesitated when the initial call to go work in the vineyard was given
 2. But now it was time for him to go
 - a. Now it was time for him to obey
- g. So verse 11 tells us,
 - i. *¹¹And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*
 1. Isn't that amazing?
 - a. Think about it... their boats were OVERFLOWING with fish
 - i. If they would have taken the time to haul all the fish to the town market to sell, they probably would have been financially set for weeks, maybe even months
 - b. But Luke says that as soon as the boats filled with fish hit the shore, Peter and the others left EVERYTHING to follow after him
 - i. They might have been scratching their heads wondering what exactly Jesus meant when he said they'd be "catching men," but even still... they obeyed
 1. Jesus had just displayed his incredible power in catching fish
 2. So whatever this "catching men" was going to look like, Peter and the others realized that HE was fully capable of making that happen!
3. So, for the rest of our time this morning, I want us to look at what the Scriptures say about this whole idea of being "fishers of men"
 - a. I was having a discussion awhile back with a brother regarding how entertainment-driven so many churches have become
 - i. We see churches having big carnivals in their parking lots
 - ii. We see churches turning the worship portion of the Sunday morning gathering into rock concerts
 - iii. We see churches spending countless hours and resources turning their buildings into fun movie sets and amusement parks
 1. As I was talking with my friend about all of these things, he argued, "Well, didn't Jesus call us to be fishers of men? All good fishermen know that they need to use good bait to lure in the fish..."
 - a. Sadly, I think that interpretation is becoming more and more common in the church today
 - b. But what do THE SCRIPTURES say about our calling to be fishers of men?
 - i. What does THE BIBLE say this calling should look like?
 1. Well, I think there are MANY different themes we can look at to answer this question, but for this morning I want to just focus on three
 - b. The first is this... if we are to truly be "fishers of men," we must proclaim who GOD is
 - c. Second, if we are to truly be "fishers of men," we must proclaim our need for REPENTANCE
 - d. And third, if we are to truly be "fishers of men," we must proclaim the message of OBEDIENCE
4. So, first, we must begin with who GOD is

- a. In Acts 2, we get our first look at Peter and the other disciples entering into their new vocation as “fishers of men”
 - i. Jesus had risen from the dead, and he was now ascended into heaven at the right hand of God
 - ii. But, as he had promised, the Father sent another to lead and guide his children, the Holy Spirit
 1. And as the Holy Spirit filled each one of the disciples, they all began speaking in tongues
 - a. These tongues were not gibberish, or some unintelligible language
 - i. These were the languages of all the people who had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks
 1. Parthians, Medes, Elamites
 2. The residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia
 3. The people of Pontus and Asia... Phrygia and Pamphylia... Egypt and Libya
 - ii. Acts 2:7 says that all of these people were bewildered, because they were hearing these disciples speaking to them in their own languages
 - b. And in verse 11 they exclaim, “How is this possible, that we hear them telling in our own tongues THE MIGHTY WORKS OF GOD?!”
- b. Friends, this is where our message must begin
 - i. This is HIS story
 - ii. This is HIS Kingdom that we are proclaiming
 1. The Gospel of the Good News is the Gospel OF GOD
 - a. In Mark 1:14, Mark writes that, after John the Baptist was arrested,
 - i. ... Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming THE GOSPEL OF GOD
 - b. In 1 Thessalonians 2:9, Paul says,
 - i. *⁹For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you THE GOSPEL OF GOD.*
 - c. In 1 Peter 4:17, Peter says,
 - i. ¹⁷For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey THE GOSPEL OF GOD?
 - iii. The way that we become “fishers of men” is that we follow the example of Paul and Peter, and even Jesus himself, as we proclaim to people the mighty works of God
 1. We tell people of His great attributes... His holiness... His righteousness... His wrath... His grace
 2. We tell people of His sovereign creation of ALL things, and how He upholds THE UNIVERSE, even still today
 3. We tell people of His grand plan to bring glory to His name throughout all the heavens
 - a. Beginning with His covenants that He made with Adam and Eve, and Noah, and Abraham, and David
 - b. And culminating in the New Covenant that has been secured through the blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus
 4. And we tell them of the reality that, in the end, ALL will bend the knee to this great God...
 - a. Either in humble and joyful submission,
 - b. Or in anger and bitterness, with much weeping and gnashing of teeth

- iv. If we truly desire to be fishers of men, we must begin with the Gospel of God
 - 1. And as we proclaim to the people who GOD is, this will naturally lead to the second theme
- 5. If we are going to be fishers of men, we must proclaim a message of REPENTANCE
 - a. This is how the Gospels begin, isn't it?
 - i. John the Baptist shows up in the wilderness in Judea in Matthew 3 preaching, "REPENT, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"
 - ii. Again, as we heard a moment ago, as John is arrested, Jesus goes to Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God, and saying in Mark chapter 1, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; REPENT and believe in the gospel!"
 - iii. And again, in Acts chapter 2, after Peter preaches his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Luke says that the people were cut to the heart, and they cried out to Peter, "Brothers, what shall we do?"
 - 1. And Peter replied to them, "REPENT and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 - b. Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is the upside-down methodology of our God
 - i. We are not called to lure the people in with sweet treats and entertainment
 - ii. The way we are called to be fishers of men is by calling them TO REPENTANCE
 - 1. For this is how we know that we have truly begun to understand who God is
 - a. When Isaiah saw who God was, he cried out in repentance, "Woe is me!"
 - b. When Peter saw who Jesus was, he fell to his face and said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!"
 - c. In Acts 5, when Ananias and Sapphira test the Holy Spirit by lying to him, they both were struck dead for their sin
 - i. Verse 11 tells us that great FEAR came upon the whole church and all who heard these things,
 - ii. And verse 14 says that "More than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women"
 - 2. When we begin to realize who GOD is, we begin to realize the sinfulness of our own hearts
 - a. And we realize that we must REPENT and turn to God
 - c. This repentance is much more than just being sorry for doing something REALLY bad
 - i. It is much more than just being sorry because we now have to face the consequences of our bad decisions
 - 1. The theologian JI Packer writes,
 - a. "Repentance is more than just sorrow for the past; repentance is a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self and serving the Savior as king in self's place."
 - 2. As we fish for men in this world, we are not calling them to add a little bit of Jesus to their lives so they can be more happy
 - a. We are calling them to change the allegiance of their entire lives
 - b. We are calling them to leave the kingdom of this world, and to become a citizen in the Kingdom of God
 - c. We are calling them to die to themselves, and to surrender EVERYTHING to Jesus as their King
 - i. The Gospel of God is a Gospel of unfathomable grace
 - ii. But it is ALSO a Gospel of great COST
 - 1. For God demands your WHOLE heart

2. He demands your REPENTANCE

- ii. We must proclaim the mighty works of God
- iii. We must proclaim the necessity of repentance

6. And third, if we are to truly be “fishers of men,” we must proclaim the message of OBEDIENCE

- a. In Matthew 28, when Jesus gives the Great Commission to his disciples, and ultimately to us, he says...

- i. ¹⁸All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- 1. As we are going out into the world, Jesus does not call us to make converts – he calls us to make DISCIPLES

- a. A disciple is a student... a learner

- b. The definition of the word used in the Scriptures of discipling others is this:

- i. To help someone progressively learn the Word of God in order to become matured

- ii. It means training someone in the truths of the Scriptures and the lifestyle required

- iii. It means teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded

- b. In light of the mighty works of God, you must repent

- i. And then you must live a life of OBEDIENCE to your King

- 1. This is the mark of those who have truly been saved

- 2. This is the mark of those who are truly disciples

- 3. This is the mark of those who truly love Jesus

- a. Jesus makes this perfectly clear in John 14:15

- i. ¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

- b. And he goes on in verses 23-24,

- i. ²³If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

- ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

- c. Friends, we are not called to fish for men by luring them into the church with fun and games

- i. We are not called to fish for men by trying to get them to make a decision for Jesus, so they can get their ticket punched for heaven

- 1. We are called to fish for men by proclaiming to them the mighty works of God, and their need to repent and turn away from their sin, and then live the rest of their lives in joyful obedience to the Word

- a. THIS is what it means to be a “fisher of men”

7. By the end of Peter’s life, he understood the seriousness of this great calling

- a. In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter wrote,

- i. ⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

- 1. You, Christians, are a chosen race

- 2. You are a royal priesthood

- 3. A holy nation, a people for God’s own possession

- a. In light of these truths, Peter says, “Proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

- b. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people, so proclaim the mighty works of this great God
 - c. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy, so go now, and be fishers of men
 - b. And as you proclaim the mighty works of God, proclaim also the necessity of repentance and obedience
 - i. For Peter goes on in verses 11 and 12,
 - 1. *¹¹Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹²Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*
 - ii. Peter had left everything to follow Jesus
 - 1. He accepted the calling to be a sojourner and an exile in this world
 - 2. And he would eventually die at the hands of an insane emperor in Rome
 - a. But he willingly surrendered everything to become a fisher of men
 - b. For he knew that one day, his Lord Jesus would return
 - i. And his great longing was that God's name would be glorified on the day of visitation
 - c. Friends, may this be the longing of our heart as well
 - i. Christ has not left us here on this earth to just sit around wondering when he'll come back
 - 1. He has left us with a mission
 - a. Be fishers of men
 - b. Go, and do the work in the vineyard
 - i. And if you find yourself hesitating or disobedient to this calling, then take heart... you're still alive!
 - 1. As long as you have breath in your lungs, you still have the opportunity to be like the son in Jesus' parable who disobeyed at first, but then went and did what the Father had commanded
 - 2. Jesus said that this was what it meant to be a true son of the Kingdom
 - 2. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus
 - a. And he is with us ALWAYS
 - i. So go, and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do all that Jesus has commanded
 - ii. Go, and be fishers of men!