

TEXT STUDY – Luke 5:1-11

Introduction: I'm sure not too many of your bosses or supervisors for no apparent reason would ever go up to you at the beginning of your day or your shift and tell you to take the day off. Imagine being told to take the day off and go fishing or something. That just doesn't happen, at least not where we work, nor should we expect it to happen. I don't think Peter ever imagined being told by Jesus to leave his place of work to go fishing, and for him and his brother Andrew and James and John too it was full-time fishing. As disciples of Jesus we have been told to go fishing too. No, that doesn't mean we can quit our jobs, buy a boat or ice shanty and go fishing every day. We still need to support our families and support the Lord's work by earning an income. But Jesus has called us to go fishing, and in a sense it is a full-time call as we fish for souls. JESUS WANTS US TO GO FISHING. We note that 1) he brings in each miraculous catch, and that 2) we are unworthy of such a calling.

I. He brings in each miraculous catch

- In our text we have a good snapshot of a day in the life of Jesus' early ministry. Wherever he went there was a crowd of people who had come to listen to his teaching. On this particular day in our text there was such a mass of people that Jesus himself felt a little hemmed in. People were pressing in around him so much that he needed some breathing room so he stepped into Peter's boat and asked him to push out from shore.
- Jesus actually used the boat as his pulpit. In the boat he sat down, as teachers did back then, to teach the people. Perhaps in smaller groups, on any given Sunday or Thursday or Saturday there are still crowds of people who flock to churches where Jesus' word is taught. Why do they come? Why are you here? Is it a duty, an obligation you feel to be here? Is it a habit, a routine part of your life? Did you come today kind of on a whim or is it because someone is making you come to church?
- Why are we here? I pray that we are here because we want to be here to listen to Jesus' teaching. Our New Man created by the Holy Spirit loves God's Word and wants to hear everything and anything it has to say about our salvation in Christ. Teach me more, Lord. Teach me more about your love that loves me even when I continue to sin. Teach me more about your power that protects me from all the evil that surrounds me and seeks my bodily and spiritual harm. Teach me Lord about your will, so that led by the Spirit I can resist temptation and gladly do what pleases you. Teach me, Lord.
- Jesus also took the opportunity and taught his soon-to-be disciples a little about fishing. Peter and his brother Andrew, James and his brother John were commercial fishermen. They had just come in from a rough night of fishing. They hadn't caught anything. Yet Jesus asked Peter and likely Andrew to go back out for a catch.
- When they threw out their nets the Lord Jesus provided a miraculous catch of fish. It was a catch these fishermen could only dream of. They were so many fish that their nets began to break. They had to call their partners James and John to help them. Both boats were so filled with fish that they started to sink. This was a fishermen's miracle of miracles. By his almighty power Jesus brought in a miraculous catch of fish.
- And yet this was nothing compared to the miraculous catch the disciples would experience on Pentecost. On that day 3,000 souls were saved through Peter's preaching. The Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised was sent in miraculous fashion to bring in a catch of 3,000 souls, changing their hearts from unbelief to faith in Jesus as their Savior. As the apostles continued to preach the gospel many more thousands were added.
- This miraculous catch of souls happens every day, even if it is just one condemned sinner who is miraculously brought to the knowledge of saving faith in Jesus, trusting him for forgiveness and everlasting life in heaven. Like the disciples Jesus sends us fishing too. With our words and actions we witness to others the life and death of Christ. Who knows how many souls Jesus has brought in through our fishing?
- Maybe we didn't even know that we were fishing, but we were. We are always fishing. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Maybe our light at times has gone a little dim. Our sinful nature persuades us quite effectively that it's no time to be a Christian hero. We are swayed to hide our Christianity and leave the witnessing to the professionals.
- We are the professionals, some a little better than others. Nobody knows Christianity better than Christians. Being a Christian qualifies you to fish for souls. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."

Transition: Jesus wants us to go fishing. As we cast the net of the gospel into the world Jesus brings in each miraculous catch, soul after soul. We must admit, though, that like Peter we are unworthy of such a calling.

II. We are unworthy of such a calling

- Peter had only one reaction to this miraculous catch of fish. He fell down before Jesus, who was with him in the boat, and said, "Go away from me, Lord: I am a sinful man!" Peter immediately recognized that he was a sinner standing in the presence of the holy God himself. It's not as if Peter didn't know who Jesus was before this. He believed that Jesus was God's Son, but this miracle called attention to this fact so clearly.
- I think that any one of us in Peter's position would have thought and said the same thing to Jesus. But even without Jesus himself standing right in front of us performing some great miracle, we realize our complete unworthiness before the holy God. Our God, the only true God is without sin. He hates sin and the sinner. He will not tolerate sin but punishes sin as he should. David wrote in Psalm 5, "The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong."
- Some think that God is being unfair by hating the sinner and punishing sin. They wonder - why would God punish sinners if they can't help but sin? That just doesn't make any sense. In reality the only fair thing for a holy God to do is to punish sin. There just is no common ground between sin and holiness. God tells us so clearly, "The wages of sin is death."
- Then there's the thought among Christians that God should just come down and scare people with some sort of earthly punishment. What they don't realize is that even as Christian sinners, we would be scared too - very scared. God's people were scared in the presence of angels who only represent God. Peter, James, and John were absolutely terrified when they heard the voice of the Father at Jesus' transfiguration. After God gave the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai, the Israelites told Moses that they didn't want God to speak to them any more because they thought they were going to die.
- As unworthy sinners we deserve nothing from God but punishment. But the holy God is also a merciful, gracious and forgiving God who loves sinners. He does not treat us as our sins deserve. Yes, he must punish sin and he did when he sent Jesus to the cross. The Father hated his Son as he suffered for our sins. He turned his back on him and let him suffer the agonies of the hell we all deserved. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us."
- God did this to Jesus, his Son, so that the suffering and payment for sin could be made and sinners would not have to be punished. With sin paid for and the Holy Spirit applying Jesus' payment for sin to our account through faith, God has no reason to punish us ever because there is absolutely no more sin. We have been washed clean through Christ's blood. Now we too are holy and "worthy" through Jesus and only through Jesus to be in God's presence forever.
- As "worthy" believers in Christ Jesus we also have a calling, a very special calling of which we are likewise unworthy. After Peter's great confession of sin, Jesus called him along with his brother Andrew and the brothers James and John to follow him full-time as his apostles. He called them to be fishers of men. Instead of casting their large nets into the sea, they would cast the net of the gospel together with other Christian fishermen into every corner of the world.
- How has our fishing been? It's uncomfortable at times to share our faith. We don't know what to say or how to say it. We're afraid of what people will think and say about us, especially if we are continually throwing the net of the gospel upon family members and friends. I'm sure the disciples were uncomfortable at first in sharing their faith. Remember how Peter even denied that he knew Jesus while our Savior was on trial.
- As uncomfortable as it may be, there is a confidence we have knowing that Jesus promised us his Holy Spirit. He reminds us, "The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Conclusion: Jesus wants us to go fishing. That doesn't mean we don't have to go into work any more. No, we still have to go to work and earn a living but even there at work we are fishing for souls if not with our words then certainly by our Christian actions. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing there are souls to be caught. Jesus wants us to go fishing. May God bless your fishing. Amen.