

Pastor Ben Libby
Sermon
7/22/2019

To Jesus Christ, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification, be glory forever Amen.

The Word of the Lord which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes to us from Luke's Gospel, chapter 5, the first eleven verses:

One time, while the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. 2 He saw two boats there along the lakeshore. The fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Jesus got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. He sat down and began teaching the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered him, "Master, we worked hard all through the night and caught nothing. But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets were about to tear apart. 7 They signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord." 9 For Peter and all those with him were amazed at the number of fish they had caught, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Have no fear. From now on you will be catching people." 11 After they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

This is the Word of God. Congregation may be seated.

Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

What was the most memorable day of work you've ever experienced? I have had many forgettable workdays, which you think would make the memorable ones stand out more. I think one of the most memorable things that ever happened to me while I was on the clock was when I was working in Madison WI, in 2009. I was a cashier at a Walgreens, and I just happened to ring up a famous college basketball coach, (perhaps the most famous living coach) the legendary Hall of Famer, Bob Knight. He was in town to call that night's basketball game for ESPN, and it just so happened to be Valentine's day. He bought

a Valentine's card for his wife, and I just happened to be the one to ring him up and wish him a good day. The thing was, I didn't realize that I did it. It was the next person in line who told me who it was who had just passed through my line. I couldn't believe it, the most famous person I ever encountered, and I did even know it! I tried to get my store manager to get me the security camera footage so I could verify the encounter and to show my roommates, but he couldn't for security reasons. I was so disappointed! I mean, this was greatness that went through my line! This was a man who coached the Indiana Hoosiers to the last undefeated season in college basketball and I didn't even notice him! It was Valentine's day during the middle of the day and it was extremely busy. We were just trying to get people in and out of the store, so I was a bit preoccupied. But still, I was so disappointed, I should have noticed! I will never forget that one time when I forgot to look up at Bobby Knight.

In our text this morning, we get an account of a very memorable day of work for the Apostle Peter. Except, it wasn't a day. In our work terms, he was working third shift. Some jobs just have to be worked at night, and when it came to fishing on the Sea of Galilee, if you were serious you fished at night. Yet, despite these fishermen's best efforts, they hadn't caught anything. The real catch would happen in broad daylight, for everyone to see. Peter came face to face with real greatness there that day, and one insignificant and forgettable night of work would turn into the day that would define the rest of his life.

That is the effect of Jesus. He calls out, and people are changed forever. When He calls out His Word, our lives are changed. When He calls us, we end up in places where we never would have been before. When He calls, we follow!

MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDIATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR MAKER AND REDEEMER, AMEN.

One time, while the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. 2 He saw two boats there along the lakeshore. The fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Jesus got into one of the boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. He sat down and began teaching the crowds from the boat.

Wherever Jesus went, the crowds would follow. Whether He was visiting a synagogue, or like here, He simply walking through the countryside, people always swarmed Him. On this occasion, Luke tells us that the crowd was so large and so eager to see Jesus, that they were "pressing in on Him".

Why did Jesus always draw such a large audience? Well, for a number of reasons. Many different sorts of people were drawn to Jesus. He would attract the attention of the curious, who no doubt had heard about what He had done previously. He would also draw many people who saw Him as a threat. People who considered Jesus their enemy would come out to see Him, to hear if He would make a mistake, or try to trick Him into saying something that might incriminate Himself. He would also draw people who wanted or needed something. The lame, the deaf, the blind. Anyone who had a sickness might be healed by Him. Perhaps some people just wanted to see a miracle performed.

But, being massed by a crowd is not an ideal way to talk to them or to teach them. He wouldn't carry around a podium everywhere He went, and He certainly didn't have a microphone or megaphone to be able to broadcast His voice. So, Jesus does something very practical here. He sees two boats on the shore. The fishermen who had occupied them had left them vacant to wash and maintain their nets. He chooses to sit in Simon Peter's boat. Jesus asks Peter to put his boat out a small distance from the shore. The boat sets off so that the great multitude might see Him.

If you have ever been on a boat, you know the acoustic and amplifying power that water can have. Even a small noise can carry a great distance over water. What Jesus did here was very practical. This way not only could the great crowd see Him better, they could also hear Him better. Then He sat down and taught. The traditional and customary way that the Jewish people were taught is a bit opposite of what we are used to. Right now, I am standing up speaking and you are sitting down and listening. This is not uncommon. Even in lectures at school, traditionally the teacher stands, and the students sit down. But in the synagogue, the teacher would sit down and teach, and the listeners would stand. Jesus sat down and taught, and He would call out to these people and teach them about the Word of God.

Yes, this was a very practical thing Jesus did, getting into Peter's boat to teach. But, it was also very personal as well. **4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch."**

Perhaps this advice from Jesus would seem a little obvious to us. After all, we know how this story turns out. Why wouldn't Peter simply listen and do what Jesus told him to do? Well, for starters, how about the fact that Peter had worked all night long, in prime time, the time of the day where the fish could not see the nets as easily and had not gotten anything. You would think that if he was going to catch fish, it would have been then. And now He was simply going to catch fish?

The fact of the matter is that what Jesus tells Peter does not make sense, nor would Jesus be the expertise to offer such a tip. After all Jesus was just some carpenter's son, and now he was telling this fisherman how to fish? Fishing to us is seen as a past time, something we do to relax and enjoy the outdoors. That was not how Peter looked at it. It was his way of making a living. It was his career. And Peter knew how to fish. No doubt he had fished that lake, Gennesaret/Sea of Galilee for his entire life. On top of it all, Jesus tells him to go out into "the deep water", a place where the fish were lest likely to be. One perhaps wouldn't blame Peter from politely declining this boat trip. He had just worked all night, no doubt he was tired. And now Peter was supposed just do these things that made no sense to his professional fisherman mind?

5 Simon answered him, "Master, we worked hard all through the night and caught nothing. But at your word I will let down the nets."

In the Gospels, Peter is not always a person that we necessarily want to reflect. He was impulsive, strong willed, stubbornly impetuous. But, in this case we could really take a page out of Peter's book.

The way that we typically think about things is cautious for the most part. We like to weigh the pros and cons. Before we make a life decision, we like to take our time, hem and haw over whether or

not it is a good idea. Of course, it is good to do these things when it is a big decision. But not when the Master tells us to do something. What Jesus told Peter to do went against every instinct Peter ever had as a fisherman. This would have been an exercise in futility for him. But this was Jesus. This was “The Master”. Peter didn’t over analyze this command. He told Him he had been previously unsuccessful all night, but on account of who it was giving this command, Peter obeyed.

And what was the result? **When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their nets were about to tear apart. 7 They signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.**

The result was the largest catch of fish this man had ever seen before. So successful was this attempt that Peter required assistance just to pull it all in. He called in to the other vessel to help them, and even then, the haul was so vast that it almost broke their nets!

What did this catch mean? Well, to hand to mouth fishermen like Peter, James, and John, this was a complete game changer. Not only would this catch make their final year, it was probably their retirement caught up in that net as well. This is the fisherman equivalent of winning the lotto. This would change everything!

But this was not a game changer finally to Peter. It was more than that. Money no longer mattered in that moment. What he had caught that day was truly life changing! It was not an overwhelming number of fish that changed Peter’s life, it was the Person in the boat who had caught his attention.

And you can see that reflected in what Peter’s response to this catch is. **When Simon Peter saw this, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord.” 9 For Peter and all those with him were amazed at the number of fish they had caught, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.**

Peter’s reaction here really reflects that of Isaiah the Prophet when he was called by the LORD. **Isaiah 6:5 "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because 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."** Peter didn’t jump for joy when he hauled in these fish, rather he was amazed and terrified. He could see that the Person who told him to do this was not an ordinary carpenter’s son. This was no mere mortal. This was the Son of God, Peter’s Lord. Where some might have seen only coincidence, Peter saw what this really was. This was true power, true holiness and righteousness.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “There is more than one way to skin a cat”? A curious phrase to be sure, after all one does not hopefully skin many cats. But this phrase truly applies to fishing. There is most definitely more than one way to catch a fish. We have some fishermen here perhaps who know this to be the case. I personally enjoy fishing, but I have not been the most avid fisherman. But even I know there are many different strategies to fishing. There are many different baits you can use. Leaches, nightcrawlers, different lures you can use. You can fish in a boat, or you can fish off a dock. You can use a troll motor; you can use waiters and fly fish. The important thing is that the fish bite.

Jesus was always followed by crowds for various reasons. But the real reason why this was the case was because of who Jesus was, who Jesus is! If He wasn't the Son of God, then people would have just looked and left. But He has staying power because He has real power, power to heal souls. Power to change lives!

Jesus attracted curious people, needful people, even hateful people. But people from all of these categories ended up coming to the same conclusion Peter did that day. Zacchaeus was curious to see Jesus, so curious that he climbed a sycamore tree just to catch a glimpse. But once Christ called to him in the tree, his life was changed. The man who was possessed by a legion of demons was in need of healing, but after Jesus called the demons out of him, the man wanted to stay Jesus. Jesus called him to go home and tell what great things God had done for him. Jesus changed his life, and he would in turn tell others about how his life was changed. Or, take Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee. Perhaps his first involvement with Jesus was in order to see what piece of information his sect could use to prosecute this man. But, after meeting with Jesus, he too could see that this was not just a Nazarene. He would hear the sweet Gospel message from Jesus himself, that whoever believed in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life. When Jesus was crucified, it was Nicodemus who helped bury Him.

And the same is true for us as well. Just like these individuals, and Peter, Jesus came into our lives and changed them forever as well. The way that Jesus lived His life gives our lives meaning. Because Jesus came to the earth, perfectly obeyed God and His will, and then lovingly gave His life on the cross to pay for the sins of the world, it now means that we get His righteousness! You are more now. More than just someone who is trying to "do their best". You are a Christian, who trusts in Christ for your salvation.

Jesus said to Simon, "Have no fear. From now on you will be catching people." 11 After they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him.

What happened after this all time catch of fish? Did Peter, James, and John cash in and then live the good life? No, they left it all behind. Presumably someone looked after those boats and those fish, but Peter no longer was simply just a fisherman. Now he would fish for men!

When Jesus says, "catching people", it brings a few images into my brain. It kind of sounds ominous. To catch someone infers that someone either needed to be caught or you seized someone. This of course is not what Jesus is talking about. This word here for "catch" has an interesting idea behind it. It means to catch, as in when a soldier would catch an enemy force, to capture alive...

There are many ways to fish, and one of the hardest things for me to learn as a child learning how to fish was the "catch and release" idea. I had done all this work to reel this fish in and now I just toss it back? I when my Father told I had to release I was resentful. But, the fish would had a minor fish stick, certainly not a fillet.

We have been captured alive by the gospel. Capture also has a negative context to it, but there is nothing negative about being in the net of the Savior. God's net has been spread over us, and it is God's Word which has reeled us in. Now, we go out and try to give others the same hope that we have been given. Being captured by Jesus is what makes truly alive.

After this miracle happened, Jesus calls these men to follow Him. So they did. He has also called you to follow Him. So, we do. We can't physically follow Him like Peter and the sons of Zebedee did, but we are His disciples. We follow what He tells us to do.

But it does not always go swimmingly. We don't always act like Peter, obeying what Jesus said just because Jesus said it. Sometimes we overanalyze and psyche ourselves out. Sometimes we don't think at all, we don't take what Jesus says to heart, and we instead do what we want to do.

But, there are a great number of fish out there that need to be captured alive. Only His gospel can do this. We have been called by Him to spread those Gospel nets. Where? Everywhere, and even in the most unlikely of places. We have been called by the Master. We need to get to work! **John 9:4-5** ⁴**I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work.** ⁵**As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."**

Yes, since the night is coming, we need to get to work now, while it is day. We have been changed forever by His Gospel. We have the blessed duty to give other people that same hope, to catch them alive as well. The call of Jesus takes us to unlikely places. Peter didn't think that he would find fish in the deep, but they were there. His call also takes us to unlikely places. It takes us to foreign countries, to places we wouldn't normally go. But it also takes us to a place we would never get to on our own, to heaven! SO, follow Him! Who else would we follow besides Jesus? He is, as Peter calls Him here, our Master and our Lord. We follow Him, and because of His great love for us, we will follow Him into Heaven forever. AMEN!!!