

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 10th 2019

Pastor Matthew Ude

Luke 5:1-11 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret, ² and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing *their* nets. ³ Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat. ⁴ When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." ⁶ And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. ⁷ So they 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. ⁸ When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also *were* James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." ¹¹ So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

Luke skips right over the teaching. Jesus sits down in the boat to teach and then he is done. Luke isn't concerned about Jesus teaching at this point. Instead he wants to tell us about Jesus and about the type of people of that Jesus calls into his service. What type of people are they? How does he call them? What does he expect of them?

Poor uneducated fishermen? You've probably heard this about the apostle. And there is certainly a point here. Jesus doesn't choose the wise of the world. The great university of his day would have been in Alexandria or Athens or Antioch, these were centers of learning. Jesus doesn't go and take his pick from top of the class of the greatest universities. He doesn't even take his pick of the greatest that Jerusalem has to offer.

Instead he chooses these fishermen on the banks of a small lake, in the backwaters of Galilee. With them He by the power of his word changes the world. Through them the gospel is spread to every corner of the world, even as far as Japan. So many are saved and brought into the church.

Not because of the greatness of these men, who were after all merely poor fishermen, but by the power of God's word.

However that isn't why Jesus chooses them. To some extent, yes, they are poor uneducated but more importantly they are sinners.

Did you notice the similarity between Peter and Isaiah's reaction?

The power and glory of the Lord that Peter witnessed was only a tiny fraction of what Isaiah saw, yet that was all it took. Peter knew that the same power which called the fish from the sea could and should strike him down where he stood.

Peter cries out in true humility. True humility is not the posturing which puts on a good show for others, repentance that recognizes my sin. In true humility Peter cries out, "depart from me, for I am a sinner."

And then the miracle happens. The greatest miracle of our text is not the catch of fish. The greatest miracle is that Jesus does not depart from Peter. He does not depart from Peter or Isaiah or from us. Not only does he remain but bestows a great blessing upon both Peter and Isaiah. He calls them to follow Him with their whole life.

They were to some extent poor uneducated fishermen, but this has nothing to do with why Jesus called them.

He calls people like Peter, it's true. But he also calls Matthew, a tax collector, one who would have been fairly well educated. And he calls Paul, one who was one of the top graduates of one of the top universities. It is not the presence or lack of earthly education that makes one ready for the service of the Lord. But what the Lord seeks above all else is a heart of true humility that recognizes my sin.

"Know thyself" is the great Greek maxim, and one of the chief teachings of Socrates. Although he talked a lot about it. Although he often discussed it, he himself never fully understood it. For knowledge of yourself is first and foremost this: I am the chief sinner.

This is not something Socrates or any man can know by themselves. This knowledge comes only from the Word of the Lord. It comes only when God through his word smashes in our hearts our foolish illusions. The illusions we in our pride have built up around us. He by His power exposes us for what we truly are, sinners.

And it is this repentant heart that Christ sought as he wandered Galilee looking for men to follow him and build the foundation of his church. Any service to Christ must begin with a humble heart.

As David prophesied, "A broken and a contrite heart, these O God you will not despise."

Christ through his word gave to the apostles hearts of humility to serve, and prepared them for His service.

We have a tendency to view these accounts as isolated incidents without considering the greater context. We hear this account and think Jesus was just strolling along the sea of Galilee and randomly picks four men to follow him. The truth is there is much more to it than that. Jesus chooses these men because they have hearts of humility but also because they are prepared.

This is not the first time these men have meet Jesus. They were there when John called to Israel, 'Behold the Lamb of God.'" They were already his followers. They had already heard his teaching. They had already seen his miracles. They were prepared ready and willing.

Furthermore this is not the call to be apostles. This was merely a call to follow him. This was a call to join his seminary so to speak. Whatever level of education the apostles had before they met with Jesus, by the time Jesus ascends they have a masters degree in evangelism and theology.

Many of you have been called to serve Christ, some of you have been called to follow but have not yet been called to serve. This is a holy and special calling. It is a gift from God that you should rejoice and delight in.

But how are you to serve? With humility and preparation.

Consider the example of the first deacons. These are men whom we would call council men. They were asked to serve the church by looking after the distribution of food, the counting of the money, taking care of the church property. Yet they dedicated themselves to the word of the Lord, and were examples to the whole church. It was Stephen the deacon who was the first martyr. He preached the word of the Lord with power and conviction. It was Philip the deacon, not Philip the apostle, who taught and baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. They accomplished these great works because they were ready and prepared in the word of the Lord. Not because they sat around thinking, "Well the Lord used fishermen he will use me by his power."

We are sinners unworthy to stand in the presence of the Lord. The Lord by his mercy doesn't leave us as he should. Instead of opens our hearts to see our sin. He call us to serve. He prepares us for that service.

Amen