

THE CALL TO BE DISCIPLES

Text: Luke 5:1-11

Readings: John 9:29-51; Matt 4:12-22

Theme: After a miraculous catch of fish Jesus called Simon Peter to catch men.

Purpose: To call you to follow the all-powerful Jesus and to make disciples of Christ.

A man named E M Bounds wrote the following: “We are constantly on a stretch if not a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God’s plan is to make much of the man, far more than of anything else. Men are God’s method. The church is looking for better methods: God is looking for better men.” (Quoted in Bill Hull; *Jesus Christ Disciple-maker*)

God is looking for men to serve in their homes as husbands and fathers, for men to serve in their workplace diligently and honestly, for men to serve in the church as elders and deacons – men of godly Christian character, who are faithful, who are, and will be, an example to others.

Jesus is also looking for men and women who are ready to be his disciples, his followers; men and women who will be ambassadors of his kingdom, workers in his harvest field, and living members of his body, the church. As we consider this passage we need to hear the call of Jesus to be his disciples and to make disciples.

From this passage we will see that to be a disciple of Jesus means:

1. To listen to his word
2. To believe in his power, and
3. To follow his person

1. LISTEN TO HIS WORD

a. Luke tells us that Jesus was by **the Lake of Gennesaret**. Luke is the only gospel writer to call it a lake; John calls it the Sea of Tiberius and Matthew and Mark call it the Sea of Galilee. It was about 10 kms wide and 20 kms long and was located about 200 meters below sea level. There were nine townships on its shores. Jesus would have been by the town of Capernaum because Simon Peter lived there and his boat was by the shore.

b. Luke tells us that Jesus was **teaching the people**.

It would have been in the morning because the fishermen were cleaning their nets after their night on the lake.

Jesus taught them “the word of God”. In chapter 4:43 we read Jesus saying; “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” This is why he had come – to teach people about God his Father so they could come to know God through him. He was constantly preaching and teaching about God and his kingdom.

That morning he began his teaching standing by the lake; the people were pressing around him. After some time he got into the boat of Simon Peter and sat down, which was the usual position for the teaching of a rabbi. He asked Simon to put out a little from the shore; that meant the people could more easily see him and hear him in that natural amphitheatre.

c. To be a follower of Jesus you need to **listen to his word**; you need to know something about him – who he is as God’s Son, and what he came to do in his suffering, death and resurrection. You don’t need to know everything about Jesus but you need to know the basic, essential facts. Today we learn that from reading the Bible, from listening to sermons, from talking to others.

d. Simon had already known Jesus **for some time**. Their first meeting was immediately after Jesus' baptism at the Jordan River by John. One of the disciples of John the Baptist was Andrew, who wanted to know more about Jesus and so spent the day with him. Andrew also invited his brother Simon to meet Jesus. From that time on Andrew and Simon and some other men, including James and John, travelled around with Jesus, but not all the time. It was a loose association, not a full commitment. Sometimes they went back to their fishing.

Jesus' approach to gaining disciples is quite different from some of the high pressure evangelism that we see today. Some zealous Christians try to pressurize people to follow Jesus; some even manipulate people into making an immediate decision.

Jesus however gave his disciples time to consider his claims. He gave them time to get to know him, to hear his teaching, to witness his miracles, and to think about what it would mean to follow him. This may have gone on for 7 to 12 months.

To be a disciple of Jesus you must listen to his word so that you know something about him.

2. You must also **BELIEVE IN HIS POWER**

a. It was probably about midday when Jesus finished speaking. He then said to Simon; "Put out into deep water and **let down the nets for a catch.**" (v 4)

Peter was a well practiced fisherman; he had been doing this all his life, this was his job, he was an expert. He and his brother Andrew had been out all night but had caught nothing. He knew that the night was the time for fishing, not the middle of the day.

He didn't mind Jesus preaching from his boat - after all, that was what he had come to do; but he didn't like Jesus interfering with his fishing while in his boat! Perhaps he felt like telling Jesus to stick to his preaching! But he had been with Jesus for long enough to respect him as one who had authority, so he reluctantly obeyed; "Master, because you say so, I will let down the nets."

b. Of course, **we know what happened!** We know how the story goes; and we know that Jesus had planned this all along!

They caught such a great number of fish that their nets began to break and they had to call over their partners, James and John, to help; they filled both boats so full they began to sink with the weight of the fish. It was a spectacular catch, no doubt the best they had ever had!

This miracle is very similar to that recorded in John 21 when the disciples were out fishing after Jesus had been raised from the dead. They were in the same place and again they caught a large number of fish. Both miracles were a testimony to the power of Jesus as the Son of God.

In the plagues on Egypt at the time of the Exodus God had demonstrated his power over frogs, flies, gnats and locusts; here Jesus demonstrated his power over the fish of the sea.

He did this so that people would know he was indeed the Son of God and that he was almighty, and so that they would believe in him.

c. This was certainly **the response of Simon**. This was a turning point for him. Luke draws our attention to this by using his full name, Simon Peter. Before this Luke has called him Simon, and after this he calls him Peter; this miracle of the fish marked a change in his relationship with Jesus.

Verse 8: "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me Lord, I am a sinful man.'"

This was a fitting response to such a display of God's power. We see examples like this in the Old Testament when men have met God, such as Abraham (Gen 18:27), Job (42:6) and Isaiah (6:5).

To be a follower of Jesus you must believe in his almighty power and repent of your sin and your lack of faith.

Have you done this? Have you come to this turning point in your life, as Peter did? Do you recognize how far you fall short of God's commands and laws, not just in the past, but all the time? Do you regularly confess this to God? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as God and do you trust in him?

To be a disciple of Jesus you must listen to his word and believe in him as the all-powerful God.

3. And you must FOLLOW HIM. This is the climax of this narrative; this is where it all comes together, this is where Jesus was heading.

a. When Peter and the others with him saw this amazing catch of fish they were **astonished and afraid**. (v 9f) They had seen an amazing display of the power of the Lord Jesus and they were in awe of him! He was almighty and they were weak; he was God and they were mere humans; he was all-powerful and they were frail.

Jesus focuses on Simon because he was going to be the leader of the 12 disciples. Jesus said; "Don't be afraid".

Peter needed this reassurance and encouragement. Jesus had exercised his power *for* him, not *against* him.

We too need this reassurance of our Lord. At times we are all too aware of how weak we are. We are feeble and frail, easily discouraged and weighed down. We too need to hear these reassuring words of Jesus; don't be afraid of your work as an office bearer in this church, or as a teacher in Sunday School, or as a cadet counsellor, or of your year of study or work, or whatever task and calling God has given to you.

b. Jesus said to Simon, "From now on you will **catch men**." Up to this point he had been catching fish, from now on he would catch men.

Calvin comments; "Christ's allusion to fishing is apt, in dealing with the preaching of the gospel, for men drift and float about in the world, as in a vast and troubled sea, and they are brought in by the gospel."

Up to now he had been catching to kill, from now on he would catch to give people life. This is what the verb literally means, "to catch alive". (It is only used here and in 2 Tim 2:26)

A little earlier Jesus had called Simon and Andrew, James and John saying, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt 4:18ff; Mark 1:16ff) This was going to be their task for the rest of their lives. The verb "catch" has the sense of an ongoing task, a continuous work.

From now on their lives would never be the same.

This call of Jesus anticipates the broadening scope of the gospel in Luke and Acts as the good news about Jesus went out to more and more people, to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles.

This is still our task today. All of us who are Christians have an ongoing task of catching men and women so we can be used by the Holy Spirit to give them life. Just before his ascension Jesus gave his disciples one main task; that is, "make disciples". This requires that we tell people about Jesus from the Bible and, when they believe, teach them all that Jesus has commanded us (Matt 28:18f).. Disciples of Christ are called to make disciples.

c. Those disciples of Jesus gave themselves to this task; "they pulled their boats up on shore, **left everything and followed him**."

Keep in mind that this was not a spur of the moment decision. They had known Jesus for as long as a year. He had given them time to consider his claims and to assess what he would call them to do.

This miracle of the fish was the decisive point for these four men. They had seen the greatest catch of their fishing career, but that catch was far less important than the man who had made it possible. They had heard Jesus teach them about God, they believed in his power, and now they were prepared to leave everything and to follow him.

Our calling is *different* from theirs.

We can't follow Jesus around Israel on foot as those first 12 disciples did because Jesus is not physically present on earth.

Nor are all of us called to leave our homes or our families or to quit our day jobs to be full-time preachers of the gospel. Later on Paul had to instruct the new believers in Corinth to remain in the situation they were in when God called them (1 Cor 7:20)..

But our calling is also *the same* as those first disciples: Jesus calls you and me to follow him, to go and make disciples, and to catch men and women so they may have eternal life.

You are called to follow Jesus in your work as an elder, deacon, cadet counsellor, Sunday School teacher, church musician or whatever other calling in the church the Holy Spirit has given you. (And if you do not have a task in the church you ought to be looking for one!)

You are called to follow Jesus in all of life, in the place God has put you - in your home, school, office, factory or farm.

This is a call to be totally dedicated to Jesus. It is a command to have no other gods before God, to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (cf. Luke 14:33).. Jesus calls you to follow him to do this wholeheartedly with 100% commitment.

Are you such a disciple of Jesus?

Amen