

Luke 5:1-11 The Lord has a message for us! Epiphany 5 February 10-11, 2019

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God's epiphany grace has been revealed through the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen. Luke 5:1-11 is much more than a lesson on how to catch fish. It is the net that gathered us and gave us life. This is God's Word. May the words of my mouth & the mediation of our hearts be centered on your truth!

Dear Christian Friends,

As you may have seen from the bulletin heading, we are still in the season of Epiphany. The season begins with the wise men being led to Jesus. But it continues to show that Jesus is the Savior for all people. It is important that we support and take part in the work of bringing the Good News of Christ to others. In the lesson, Peter is the main character effected by Jesus. Although he had known Jesus for a while, the Lord was going to teach him a great lesson that day. It's a lesson that we continue to believe and share with people today. *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) So, take time to listen because:

The Lord has this message for us and for all!

First, believe and follow His message. Jesus was preaching along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. People, including Peter, had seen and heard Jesus earlier. Jesus' word drew people to the lake to listen to Him and by that word He performed miracles. So many people were crowding around Him that He could barely be heard. So, Jesus commandeered Peter's boat to go out on the lake so He could preach to everyone. Peter knew Jesus enough to believe that it was better for him to quit working on his fishing nets and listen to Jesus. After He heard Jesus preach about God's coming kingdom and the need to repent and believe, the Lord gave Peter a greater challenge for his faith. He told Peter and his fellow workers on the boat to go to deep water and let down the nets. This made no sense to Peter because no fish were caught the whole night before. Yet, at the Master's word, Peter threw the nets in.

What followed could only be a miracle. The net was completely full with so many fish it was too heavy to haul into one boat. Peter called James and John to help. When they finished, their boats were filled to capacity. What a difference from the empty boat while fishing without Jesus than with Him! This immediately led Peter to confess that Jesus was not just a master but the Lord. *"When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!' For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken"* (v.8-9).

It's understandable why Peter or his co-workers should feel this way. They were expert fishermen. Yet, at Jesus' powerful command to let down the nets, the fish were practically jumping into the boat! Jesus' power was frightening. What might Jesus do next? Peter was too humble to want to find out. He confessed that he was a sinner who didn't belong in the presence of the Son of God. All of us should think this way, when we remember the times we have doubted God's Word or disobeyed His Word or ignored His truth for selfish reasons. Too often we have sinned by fearing when we face a problem rather than trusting in Jesus. We don't deserve to have Jesus as our Savior. No one in this world has earned that right. We haven't won anything to have the status of being God's children. We deserve to die and face judgment before the holy God. Yet, it is this very truth of God that prepares us to hear the Good News!

Jesus said that He didn't *"come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved"* (John 3:17). He is talking about us! He didn't come *"to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Luke 5:32). *"Jesus said to Simon [Peter], 'Don't be afraid'"* (v.10). Jesus was saying, "You can trust in Me! I won't hurt you or fail to help you. I performed that powerful miracle to assure you that God, My Father sent Me to save you!" Peter didn't jump out of the ship to escape. When they got to shore and took care of the fish, Jesus powerfully called Peter and others to follow by faith.

Second, Jesus was saying: I have a message for you not only to believe but to tell to others!

Jesus told them, *“Don’t be afraid, from now on you will catch men”* (v.10). The original says: *you will take men alive*. You will offer people something to give them life. If Jesus’ word caught fish, they could be confident that His Word would catch people! Peter had seen it already with the crowd along the shore. He had talked with Jesus previously and knew that Jesus was sent from God to be his Savior.

What was the fishermen’s reaction to His powerful call? *“They pulled their boats up on shore, left everything, and followed him”* (v.11). The need was so great for people to hear about Jesus that Jesus took these common fishermen and made them His apostles. They became the first full-time called workers by Jesus. He sent those early disciples out with His powerful Word and by the grace of God many people were made ready to hear Jesus. When Jesus would later come through the same towns where the disciples had been, people joyfully welcomed Him as their Savior! Later in life the disciples would instruct others to speak about Jesus. The Holy Spirit would inspire one follower to write the gospel that we are reading!

Today there is still a great need for missionaries and called workers from our country to proclaim Christ to the world. Pastors, missionaries, Christian teachers, and those preparing for ministry in schools need our daily prayers. Perhaps some of you in the congregation have been given talents that you should consider the preaching or teaching ministry. But, no matter who we are, we all have opportunities to speak about Jesus. Paul wrote, *“In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...Do this with gentleness and respect”* (1 Peter 3:15).

Bringing the saving news of Christ is everyone’s job. There was a story about a man who made specialized shoes for people with severe foot problems. He became well-known for his abilities. Yet, when someone new asked the man what he did, he said, *“My full-time work is to tell people about Jesus as the Savior. My part-time job is making specialized shoes. We can say the same: whether in a factory, office, school, store, or home, our full-time jobs are telling people about Jesus. The Lord can use all of us by our words, actions, offerings, and prayers so that more people are caught with the gospel of Christ! Fishing for fish takes patience and so does fishing for people. We set out the bait, which is God’s Word. The Gospel carries its own power to change people’s lives. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work to keep us trusting in Jesus and will give us opportunities to speak to others.*

This is the season of Epiphany. From the wise men to the disciples and beyond, each generation has learned the truths about Jesus and passed this saving word on to others. The Lord has a message of salvation for us to first hear and believe and then to share. We pray that He will continue to call more pastors and teachers go into the world with His Word. We pray that He would move our hearts to give thanks to God for the gospel that has changed our lives and will change many more. Amen.