

That You May Know

it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:3-4 ESV)

When Jesus Calls

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Luke 5:1-11

Kade Weening

Introduction:

Good morning, church! It's an honour and a privilege to be able to open God's word for us this morning. Today we will continue in our first-Sunday-of-the-month series in Luke, though some of you may remember that we skipped last month, and so I believe it would be wise to give us a bit of a recap as to what we have been learning in Luke's gospel so far.

The first four chapters of Luke that we have covered have focused primarily on Jesus' birth, early life, and the beginning of his ministry. Each week, our texts have revealed and taught us more about Jesus' character- specifically, his authority. We've learned about his authority over the scriptures, as he proclaimed the prophecies in Isaiah as fulfilled by himself; as well as his authority over demons and the spiritual forces of this world; and his authority over our physical bodies and our health. In our last look at Luke's gospel, we also learned of Jesus' compassion, when he took the time to place his hand on each and every person who sought to be healed. However, we also saw that there came a time when Jesus needed to leave the crowds, since his main purpose was not to heal us of our physical pain, but rather, he came to save us from our spiritual death. We learned that Jesus' main purpose was to share the gospel, and that that should be our main purpose as well.

With that being said, our mission of sharing the gospel, if successful, will most likely lead to the question of, "What now?"- which is such an important question! Not just for the new believer, but for those of us who have been following Jesus for a while as well. What should happen to our lives when we begin to follow Jesus? What changes should occur, and what should we expect to happen?

Imagine you have a friend or co-worker who tells you that they want to become a follower of Jesus, and begins asking you these “what now?” questions - what would you say? It’s one thing to share the gospel - it’s one thing to lead people to the baptismal tank, but what is on the *other side* of that step of obedience? In our passage this morning, we are going to talk about the **call to discipleship** and what it looks like. From the call Jesus gives us to follow him, the response we should have, and the transformative power that following Jesus will have on our lives, God’s word will help direct us to the answers for those “what now” questions and teach us about the call to discipleship.

With that, would you turn in your Bibles with me to Luke chapter 5, we will be reading verses 1 to 11; hear now God’s holy, inherent, inspired, living and active word for us today.

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 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. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. Luke 5:1-11 ESV

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

After reading the passage, I want us to ask ourselves why we think this story is in the Bible. What is its purpose?

See, I'm sure that for many of us, the miracle of the fish is what immediately jumps out as the main purpose of this passage. There is no doubt that it is an incredible story, and in the context of the previous chapters in Luke, it seems as though Jesus’s purpose here is just to continue revealing his authority through another display of his miraculous power.

However, I want us to reexamine the text and notice that this miracle, while incredible, is not the main purpose, but rather, it's the personal call that Jesus gives to the three fishermen, Peter (who at this time was called Simon), James, and John, to become his disciples.

What I want us to see this morning is that this whole scene we are reading about is not coincidental, or random, but was orchestrated for these fishermen; the miracle is not the climax of this story, but rather, it's when Jesus says to the Simon, James, and John: "Do not be afraid, from now on YOU will be catching men".

THIS statement is the main thrust of this passage. Everything we've read about before this is simply a buildup to the amazing call to discipleship that Jesus gives to these men. So, as we look at our text this morning, we should begin by asking the question:

What Does This Passage Reveal to Us About the Call to Discipleship?

I suggest that the first thing this passage reveals, is that:

1. The Call to Discipleship is an Honour and a Privilege

Consider the crowds that were pressing in to listen to Jesus' preaching. They were growing and people were trying to get as close to Jesus as possible. This is an important detail for us to notice, as it speaks to Jesus' mounting popularity. And this makes sense, as during that time, to be able to sit under a Rabbi's teaching, especially a new one, was a privilege for any Jew.

It was also common in those days for Jews to make it their mission to follow around a rabbi and listen to their teaching. And for those who wanted even more access to a rabbi and his teaching, they would actually have to apply to become official students and disciples of a particular rabbi. In the context of the scene in our passage this morning, I don't think it would be incorrect to assume that many people who were in the audience desired to be disciples of Jesus.

However, notice that it isn't any of these people that Jesus ends up asking to follow him. Instead, Jesus calls three fishermen who were just doing their jobs at the lake that day.

I believe we can sometimes wrongly believe that it is we who "find Jesus"- that WE are the pursuers. But the reality is that before we EVER pursued God, He first pursued us! We catch a glimpse of that in this story.

So consider today, Christian, how incredible it is that you are here this morning. If you have received the call to become a disciple of Jesus, the son of God, then do not take that lightly. Jesus has called you, and it is a tremendous honour and privilege to serve Christ and follow him!

And the fishermen certainly knew this, as we see that when Jesus calls them to come follow him, they go immediately, without hesitation!

And it is important to note that being a fisherman was not a lowly trade. Fishermen were known to be intelligent and strong labourers. They provided food for their families and their communities, and despite hard nights like the one they had experienced previously, it would be wrong to think that they were leaving a life of poverty and dishonour. The reality is, they had a profitable and honorable lifestyle, but following Jesus was much better.

These men would have seen Jesus' popularity and the crowds that followed him, and so there's no doubt that this new life they were stepping into, they thought, would bring many benefits... following Jesus was a no-brainer!

Now, over the course of this sermon, we will spend a lot of time considering the *cost* of discipleship - and rightfully so. But, before we do that we need to recognize that **WHATEVER THE COST MAY BE**, it is **WORTH** it! Following Jesus will cost you everything. But it is an honour and a privilege.

And so ultimately, your social status, your job, your income; these things should not matter at all when it comes to following Jesus. If Jesus has called you, then there is no greater honour than what will come from living a life for Christ. The world does not have anything to offer in comparison to what Jesus offers us: salvation from our sins, a new and transformed life, and a personal relationship with him.

Which leads us to the next thing we see:

2. The Call to Discipleship is Personal and Intentional

Think about when Jesus calls the fishermen again... Isn't it interesting that Jesus doesn't simply say to the crowd: "Who here *wants* to follow me?" He doesn't issue a *general* call in this story. He issues a *specific, intentional, personal* call, directed at Simon, James, and John. Look with me again at verse 3:

Getting into one of the boats, **which was Simon's**, he asked him to put out a little from the land. Luke 5:3 ESV

This detail about Simon may seem like a random, matter-of-fact detail that Luke happens to include, but we should not be quick to forget that Simon and Jesus had already met! In our last passage near the end of chapter 4, Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law. Jesus knew Simon and clearly had a purpose for him, not just to provide him the blessings of a healed mother-in-law or a mound of fish, but to reveal to him his authority in personal and life-changing ways.

Why else was is this call personal? Well lets look again at verse 9:

For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men. Luke 5:9-10 ESV

Consider Jesus' words, "from now on you will be catching men". Why do you think he used that language? Did he have to use that language when he called Matthew the Tax Collector? No! So, why did he say it this way? Its because he is speaking to *these three men* in a language that they can understand.

These fishermen understood the imagery Jesus was using, which proved once again that this call was meant for them. It was another way Jesus personally related to them.

One commentator puts it this way:

The word picture Jesus uses is inverted: while fishermen snatch living fish away to their death, Peter and the other disciples will be engaging in snatching spiritually dead people away to life. ¹

Even the words Jesus uses are specifically used for those he is trying to call. His call is personal and intentional!

Now with this being said, by extension, if you've been called by Jesus to follow him and become his disciple, how did he call you? I assume that for many of us we haven't thought about

¹ Mike Mckinley, *Luke 1-12 For You*, (New Malden, UK: The Good Book Co., 2016), 61.

that all that much. But when we take the time to look back on our lives, we can see the amazing story that God wrote out for each one of us, and how Jesus has personally called us to himself. Maybe it was a long process, where you grew up in a Christian home and just day by day came to know Jesus personally over time. Or maybe you're sitting here today and remember the amazing moment where Jesus' call totally transformed your life in an instant- maybe he met you in a dark place or a hard time, and you felt the call immediately.

Whatever your story is, I think we should be reminding ourselves and dwelling on the Lord's work in our lives more often, because when we do, we can personally understand the amazing God we serve, and the one who has personally and intentionally orchestrated our lives to call us to himself and make us his disciples.

Now, with that being said, Jesus' call, while an incredible thing, does not always seem to come at the most opportune time. I'm sure we are all thankful now for Jesus' work in our lives, but in hindsight, those moments when Jesus meets us are not always easy, and in many ways, can be disruptive. And that's the third thing we should see, is:

3. The Call to Discipleship is Disruptive to our Former Lives

Take a look with me at verse 4:

And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, Put out into the deep and let your nets down for a catch” And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down my nets.” Luke 5:4-5 ESV

What we see here is Jesus disrupting Simon's life! He has just fished all night and caught nothing, and, as we see in verse 2, He had just finished washing his net! And washing a net was not just a quick little chore. Washing a fishing net in those days was a tough and tedious task. The nets were heavy, and it wasn't easy work trying to get all of the gunk out of them. It also would have been a much more frustrating job after a night of not catching any fish! All the hard work, none of the reward. And now, after doing all that work, a travelling rabbi who's already been using your boat, now asks you to throw those nets back in. How much more disruptive can you get?!

Now, isn't it true, church, that when we feel the call to follow Jesus, it causes some disruption in our lives? Maybe it has nothing to do with cleaning nets and having worked all

night, but maybe Jesus calls you just as you start dating someone that you've liked for a long time, but isn't a Christian. If you answer the call and begin following Jesus, that's going to cause some problems!

Maybe Jesus meets you in a place where you are the busiest you've ever been, pursuing your career or other ventures... you seem to not have any spare time for even friends and family, but now you feel this call to follow Jesus, but are wrestling because you know it will require a big change in your lifestyle.

I suggest that when Jesus calls us in these moments, it is not just a random inconvenience, but rather, it's God testing our obedience, our faith, our trust, and our humility. Are we willing to deny ourselves and serve Christ, obeying his commands, even when it seems inconvenient? Are we willing to trust that Jesus' way is the better way, and not lean on our own understanding?

The proverbs are filled with warnings regarding our lack of wisdom:

Do not be wise in your own eyes Proverbs 3:7 NIV

trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight Proverbs 3:5-6 NIV

For Simon, this was not the easiest request in that moment. We can see a bit of his reluctance when we hear his response to Jesus. Look again at verse 5:

And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!" Luke 5:5a ESV

And that's a pretty understandable response right? Don't we so often in our sinfulness make excuses and try to get out of obeying?

But Simon doesn't end with that reluctant excuse. Despite his reluctance, despite the inconvenience of having to cast out his freshly clean nets, Simon in verse 5 says,

"But at your word, I will let down my nets." Luke 5:5b ESV

Simon displays the response to Jesus that we should always have. Despite our circumstances, our busyness, the disruption it may cause, we are to humble ourselves, take a step of faith, and walk in obedience.

This takes us to our fourth point, our passage reveals that

4. The Call to Discipleship Enables Us to See Clearly

One of the intriguing things about this story is that - while it is not the first time that Simon witnessed one of Jesus' miracles - it seems to have been the first time that he came to see that Jesus was *immensely different* than anyone he had ever met before. Look again at verses 6-8:

And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 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. But when Simon saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Luke 5:6-8 ESV

Consider Simon's response here... it doesn't make any sense! I can just imagine some of the other fishermen after seeing this incredible catch, and their probably thinking to themselves: "man this guy should come preach here all the time! We will never have to work again!... Hey Jesus, bring a new crowd next week and do the fish thing!"

However, for Simon, the fish didn't matter to him at all... the fact that he had enough to provide for his family for months didn't matter at all... Simon's eyes had just been opened to see that

1. This Jesus is Holy, and
2. He (Simon) is a sinner, and he does not deserve to be in the presence of such holiness.

This is so important for all of us to recognize- and a true disciple can never skip this step. We are not truly disciples until we have a right estimation of God and a right estimation of ourselves. We are sinful people, who are in desperate need of a saviour. Without this posture, we can't truly receive salvation- without this posture, we won't realize the necessity to repent and turn from our sin, and put our faith and trust in Jesus.

These thoughts are sobering and convicting, and rightfully so. We cannot approach Jesus and say yes to his call without first humbling ourselves and truly recognizing who He is- the Holy Son of God, and the only one who can free us from our life of sin which leads to death. But also notice how Jesus responds to Simon's statement in verse 10:

And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."
Luke 5:10b ESV

Jesus doesn't say: "Y'know Simon, that's true. You are a sinful man, and aren't worthy of being one of my disciples", he also doesn't say "hey don't talk that way, believe in yourself and in your abilities"... no. Jesus doesn't even argue with Simon calling himself a sinner- because that's the truth!

Jesus' response here shows that while Simon is indeed a sinful man, Jesus has shown him grace and mercy, he has called Simon to follow him, and therefore, he should not be afraid, but be ready to turn from his sinful ways and follow Jesus, calling others to repent from their sins and do the same.

J.C. Ryle is helpful here, and says,

Let us seek more and more to realize that without a mediator, our thoughts of God can never be comfortable; and the more clearly we see God, the more UNCOMFORTABLE we must feel. Above all, let us be thankful that we have Jesus the very mediator whose help our souls require, and that through him we may draw near to God with boldness and cast fear away.²

And that brings us to my final point.

5. The Call to Discipleship Leads to a Transformed Life

We've seen that the call to discipleship requires us to step out in faith, obey his commands, and humble ourselves before Christ. But it also means that we don't stay in our old

² J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on The Gospel of Luke*, (Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, 2020), 90.

habits and lifestyle. When Jesus calls us, we are called to a new life! Look with me again at the end of the chapter, beginning in verse 9:

For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. Luke 5:9-11 ESV

They left EVERYTHING! They left all those fish, they left their families, and they stepped into a life where all they had was Jesus to follow and rely on; this is what we are called to do as well!

And consider how their lives change after this. They go from being fishermen, who spent their days doing long, hard work, descaling fish and cleaning nets, to men who preached to thousands of people at the same time! These men would eventually heal the sick, cast out demons, and save souls for Jesus! Their lives were TRANSFORMED. Could you imagine if they had said no? They would not have been able to be a part of the Messiah's rescue mission, and it all could have been missed if they had chosen to hold on to those fish, or decided not to cast out their nets again.

The reality is that, for many of us, following Jesus will not require us to leave our jobs or our families, but it will require us to take those things off of the pedestals we have them on, and turn our eyes upon Jesus, placing him at the centre of our lives, and presenting ourselves as living sacrifices to him!

Now, it is often the case that we read this story and then say something along the lines of "Wow! I could NEVER step out in faith like that!" But I don't think that's the right conclusion. Remember, we noted earlier that a call to follow a famous rabbi was a *tremendous privilege!* While it WAS a big step of faith to follow this holy rabbi, these three men had no idea what they were jumping into. They had visions of the shouts of praise and honour, which wound up happening on Palm Sunday! But they never envisioned what would happen on Good Friday. When they first heard the call to discipleship, they had no idea what it would cost.

Therefore, for us today, when Jesus calls us to follow him, it is a much harder request than it was for the fishermen. We know what happened to Jesus on Good Friday, and we have his own words which say that

“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.” John 15:18 NIV

“ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.” John 15:20b NIV

We know that in order to follow Jesus, we are called to take up our cross, suffer for righteousness, and live not for ourselves, but for Jesus and all those around us. But also, and praise God for this! We, unlike the fishermen, know that the true honour we receive is not on this earth, but is in heaven, when we are told “well done good and faithful servant” and enter eternity with Jesus. So, as we come to a close, ask yourselves these questions:

Have you received the call to discipleship?

Have you responded with obedience and humility?

Are you ready to count the cost, and live a life centred around him and bringing him glory?

Are you making disciples as he has made of you?

This is what our passage asks of us today, this is what Jesus asks of us today. My prayer is that each one of us would be called, and that we respond faithfully, no matter the disruptions, no matter the cost, but follow Jesus until we receive that incredible honour in heaven.

Let's pray.