

Luke 5:1-11
What You Have Is Enough
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This morning I would like to look at a story with you in which Jesus is talks to a group of fishermen. At the beginning of the story these fellas find themselves inadvertently among a group of people listening to Jesus. But then during the course of the conversation Jesus addresses them, so that by the end they have left their nets and are now following Jesus. We see in this story the transition of listening to following, from hearing to doing.

When Jesus speaks, he means for people to hear, but not only to hear. Jesus means for people to hear and then decide to get involved in the work that Jesus is doing in the world.

We are continuing our walk through the Gospel of Luke, and we come now to Luke chapter 5. I would like to invite you, to reach for your copy of Scripture or the one we've made available to you, or turn your attention to the screens. And as you are able I invite you to stand out of reverence and respect for God's word as we listen to Luke 5:1-11.

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, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.³ 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. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ 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 But 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 that they had taken, ¹⁰ 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."^[a] ¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

When Jesus speaks, what people hear is the word of God. This may sound like the kind of churchy thing you expect to hear from someone like me. But if we look at this story and imagine ourselves in the crowd that day, what you must realize is that wherever he went people encountered this man Jesus. And whenever he spoke to them, he spoke as someone who knew that everyone of them were people who were consumed and vexed by all sorts of cares and concerns—just as we are. And everywhere he went Jesus said to the people: "I know that you are carrying heavy burdens, I know your hearts ache for all sorts of things, some that are good, and some painful. But I know your longing. And I say to you, come to me, let me carry your burden, take my yoke upon you—it's an easy one. I know the challenges you face, and my promise to you is that I have come to give you life, not more burdens." So compelling are Jesus' words to us that, what people are hearing is the very word of God.

Within that crowd that day were fishermen, they had come in from a long night of fishing and as they're cleaning their nets, something is missing. Do you know what it is? Fish. They caught nothing. So while they're cleaning their nets the crowd continues to grow until it envelops them. Without really trying to, these men had become a part of the crowd that was following Jesus.

Does anyone know what it's like to sort of by mistake become listeners to Jesus? Maybe some of you are in this room. Maybe a co-worker just kept talking about him. Or my favorite, because it's sort of a part of my story of faith, I went to youth group growing up, but it was not primarily because of Jesus. Do you know what it was? The girls. That's where they were. But even by accident we can become hearers of Jesus.

Then what happens next is the first key point that I want to show you. When God starts to speak to you he invites you to get involved with what he is doing in the world. Rather than people who just casually listen to him, Jesus challenges them to step up and get involved. And what happens in verse 3 is Jesus gets into one of the boats, then says to Simon: "put out a ways, I need somewhere to continue teaching." This is remarkable, it's so simple, but it's so profound. Simon, you have a boat, I need a boat to be able to do what I came here for, let me use your boat.

Every single one of you will have this moment in your life—it may happen many times—Jesus will say to you, "you have something I need to keep doing what I was sent here to do." It doesn't have to be fancy or religious, it doesn't have to be a holy thing, it could be something very ordinary—for Peter it was his fishing boat.

Every single one of you is uniquely positioned to allow God to use what you have to achieve his good purposes for the world.

And let me tell you it is already happening. I could go around the room and say something about each of you, but that would take a long time, because you're so wonderful. But let me say a few things: About once a month we get a card in the mail, hand-written, so thoughtful, from Harriet McLaughlin, you are an excellent encourager Harriet, thank you for using your gifts. Kyle Kerr and Randy O'Brien, you have gifts in computer programming, and audio engineering respectively, thank you for using what you have to serve God. Linda Gabel, anytime there is something happening here you have already set up tables and are here getting ready. Thank you for using what you have. Tim Eubank, you are an excellent communicator, and have a very tender caring heart. You minister to people when they dial 911 in crisis, you offer calm assurance that help is on the way. Thank you for allowing what you have to be used by God. On and on I could go.

Anything that you actually have is potentially what Jesus could come to you and say: "Hey you who have been listening, it's time for you to come and get involved." That's the first step in discipleship. The second one happens a few verses later when Jesus had finished teaching. After he was through Jesus turned to Peter and said, "put out into the deep." Now Jesus could have said go a little ways out, where we can still touch. But he didn't, he said, out where it's deep. Peter's next step required that he trust Jesus' leading. The second step of discipleship always leads us to a place that is over our heads, where we must trust Jesus.

What happened to Peter was Jesus asked him to do something that he thought was the wrong thing. This doesn't make sense Jesus, we fished all night and didn't catch anything. Now it is daytime, and these nets we have, they're big and bulky and made of linen, and guess what? The fish will see them

a mile away, and they will turn and swim the other direction—laughing as they go. What you are asking us to do Jesus makes no sense to us. But this is the second challenge of discipleship, trusting that Jesus is leading in a good direction and then following his lead.

Very often when Jesus invites us to put out into the deep, that is to do the thing that requires us to trust him, it will not make sense.

Again, I want to illustrate this point with a story from our congregation. Mary Kramer, I know that when you first felt an inkling about going to Myanmar to meet with and pray for and alongside, you said that doesn't make any sense.

We as a church have been on a Spiritual Journey together with Jesus—you all for much longer than Amy and I have been here with you. But in the years that I have been your pastor I have seen incredible growth in you Spiritually—it's so encouraging. This last year, I believe brought more growth and confirmation of God's presence and faithfulness to us than I have ever experienced. Lives were transformed, people took risks in serving God, others answered the call to go places or do things they didn't think possible, and what that means is you all have experienced some of the manifold goodness and faithfulness of God.

But deep in my Spirit I believe that this next year will be even more powerful, primarily because of the faith it will require for us to answer the call God is placing before us in the coming months. Last weekend your session sat downstairs together over breakfast and we prayed, we listened, we read scripture together all for the purpose of discerning some of the places we felt God was leading us to go as a community. We listened as people talked about the growth and risk before us in developing our Preschool, deepening partnerships with local outreach ministries, coming alongside people in our community who have deep needs and longings that only the Spirit of God can meet. To take risks in reaching new demographics of people with the transformative power of Jesus. This is getting me excited, is anyone else excited, if you are sit there silently and affirm me in your brains, yes?

Listen, the call to follow Jesus is the most adventurous and exciting thing in the world, because it invites us to join something that the rest of the world thinks is silly. Bless those who are weak, poor, brokenhearted, peacemakers? That's odd. Turn the other cheek instead of becoming consumed with rage and vengeance when someone wrongs you. Makes no sense. Invest in things that do not necessarily turn a profit, or gain status among the powerful and highly regarded, but rather yield a reward far beyond money? Sounds ridiculous.

And do you see how Simon and his buddies respond? But at your word. I like the way the New RSV puts it, "Yet if you say so." This is the triumph of faith, the great move of discipleship, following Jesus even when it doesn't make any sense. Yet if you say so Jesus, we will do it.

And when they did this, Jesus commanded them to cast their nets into the water. And into those nets was such a great catch of fish that they had to call to their buddies on shore to come out and help them because the weight of the fish was beginning to capsize their boat. When you choose to not only listen to Jesus' word, but to follow his leading and do what he asks of you, it is always the very best thing for you.

That's the lesson here. It's not, you follow Jesus and he will make you economically prosperous—even though people want to turn this into that sort of message. That's not the message here, do you know why? They leave it all behind at the end to follow Jesus. Why? Because they knew that in that moment, they were in the presence of God. And nothing in this world could be better than being near to the presence of God, not winning a sixth Super Bowl, not beating those despicable Patriots in this Super Bowl, not winning the lottery, not finally getting the answer to the prayer you've prayed for so long. No all of these things wither in the light of God's presence when he is near to us—so that nothing else matters.

Jesus has come near to us, and he invites you to allow him to use that which you already possess for his good purposes. Then when the time is right to trust him to take you someplace that doesn't make sense to you, but you know is the right thing. And finally, to allow him to reveal to you what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Amen.