

Luke 5:1-11

During this Epiphany Season, a lot of attention is paid to the **calling** of various prophets. Last week we heard about **Jeremiah's** calling, while **this** week's Old Testament Lesson speaks about **Isaiah's** calling. God has a good **reason** for telling us about these events. He wants us to feel **confident** that these men were sent by **God** Himself. They didn't come up with their own **messages**, nor did they **choose** the office of **prophet** on their own. In fact, **many** of the prophets showed a definite **reluctance** to take on this great responsibility. Of course in the end, God always won out. This same guidance and direction from God was **also** evident in the calling of Jesus' 12 **disciples**. The Scriptures tell us, "*Men spoke **from God** as they were being carried along by the **Holy Spirit**.*" Our text today relates the calling of the first **four** of Jesus' disciples, and we'll consider their calling under the theme - **Going Fishing**. It's a **fitting** theme because all four of these men were **fishermen** by trade - two sets of **brothers** - Peter and Andrew, James and John. Jesus shows us that even though **they** were the **professionals**, it was **Jesus** who knew where the **fish** were, and it was **also** Jesus who had all the right **bait**.

It isn't surprising to us that Jesus knew **where** to fish. We know that He is God's Son, and that He is **omniscient**, or all **knowing**. The knowledge of Jesus is so penetrating that He knew right down to the **moment** the time when this huge school of fish would be passing under their boat. Interestingly enough, this miracle can also be explained in **another** way. Because Jesus is the Son of God, He is also **omnipotent**, or all **powerful**. Therefore, as the ruler over the seas and all that's **in** them, Jesus could have actually **commanded** those fish to be in the proper place at the proper time.

As I said before, this isn't surprising to **us**, because we can look **back** and see Jesus risen from the **dead** in all His heavenly **glory**. But this catch of fish **was** somewhat surprising to Jesus' **disciples**. At that particular point in time, they knew Jesus primarily as the **carpenter** from Nazareth, even though they had already witnessed His miraculous changing of water into wine at the wedding of Cana. At any rate, **this** miracle was considerably **more impressive**. Jesus said, "*Put out into the **deep water**, and let down your nets for a catch.*" The words were addressed to **Peter**, and they caused a **conflict** within him. Peter's answer seems to indicate a degree of

doubt. He said, *“Master, we worked hard **all** through the **night**, and caught **nothing**.”* Peter’s human **reason** and fishing **experience** were telling him that Jesus was suggesting an unlikely **time** for catching fish (about noon), as well as an unlikely **place** (the **deep** water). Peter and his partners had tried all the **proven** methods for catching fish with **no results**. Peter was **tired**, and his old Adam was telling him to go to **bed** and get some **sleep**. But Peter’s **faith** was telling him something **else**. It was saying that even though it didn’t seem to make any **sense**, and even though it wasn’t **convenient**, he should listen to Jesus **anyway**. It was Peter’s **faith** which won the battle. He replied, *“But at **your word**, I will let down the nets.”* Peter’s response wasn’t **logical**, and it wasn’t **practical** - it was simply an act of **faith**.

God richly **blessed** that faithful response too. Jesus brought about a **tremendous** catch of fish - a catch which was beneficial for **many** people, but which was **particularly** beneficial for those four fishermen. Why? Because it touched the part of their lives with which they were the most **familiar** - it touched what they knew **best** - what was **closest** to their **hearts**. The miracles involving the **sea** were most appreciated by disciples like Peter, Andrew, James, and John because they were **fishermen**. In a similar way, the miracles of **physical healing** were most appreciated by St. **Luke** because he was a **doctor**. What this **shows** us is that although the generosity of Christ is extended to **all**, **some** will reap a greater benefit.

The same thing is true of God’s **Word**. The **message** will always remain the same - equally generous to **all**. But the greatest **benefits** of God’s Word will go to those who hold that Word closest to their **hearts**. It’s equally true that those who hold God’s Word **dearest**, will be the most aware of their own **sinfulness**. When Peter saw there were so many fish that they nearly caused two boats to **sink** he said, *“Go **away** from me, because I am a **sinful** man, Lord”* Peter didn’t really want Jesus to **leave** - and what a blessing it was that Jesus **didn’t** leave him. Peter simply felt the full weight of his sins as he compared **his life** over against the generous **blessing** of fish which Jesus had just given. The two didn’t fit together, and Peter was **painfully** aware of it.

In reality, the blessings in our text go far **beyond** supplying a huge catch of **fish**. In fact, we don’t even know what **happened** to the fish after our story ends. More importantly, there were blessings to the **people** of

Galilee who had come out to hear Jesus **speak**. Jesus had preached the **Word** to a great multitude of them, and I think it's safe to assume that **some** of them lingered on the shore and **witnessed** this miracle from afar. Perhaps among them was **Luke**, the man who **recorded** the incident in our text.

And **certainly** there were blessings to those four relatively **new** disciples. Actually, this was the **second** time Jesus had **called** them into His service. The **first** time He had allowed them to continue with their fishing business, but **this** time we're told, "*They left **everything** and followed Him.*" They literally **abandoned** the fruits of years of hard labor - their boats, their nets, their fish, even their co-workers - they left them **all** behind. They didn't **need** those things anymore, because **now** they would no longer be catching **fish** - they would be catching **men**. And equally as significant, their actions would no longer result in **death** for their **captives** - rather, their actions would result in eternal **life** for those who received their message in **faith**.

It's **fun** to **Go Fishing** with Jesus, because He knows where all the **believers** are. I remember **Going Fishing** with my **father** as a child. Sometimes I would catch a **few** fish, but **most** of the time Dad would catch **all** the fish, and I wouldn't catch **any**. It was very discouraging, so I would change **poles**, or change **baits**, or fish off the **other side** of the boat. But the result was still the **same** - **Dad** caught all the fish. In many ways fishing for **souls** with **Jesus** is very similar - **He** catches **all** the souls. Many times those who are fishing along **with** Jesus are not even **aware** that He caught another one. There are times in the work of the Church when it might seem from **our** point of view that nothing at all is being **accomplished**. But Jesus knows **better**. It's impossible to remain **neutral** toward Jesus and His Word. **Everyone** reacts - His enemies with **hatred** and **reviling** - His disciples with **humility** and **reverence**. Thank God that Jesus **continues** to fish with us in the Church today - turning those who are His own to **revere** Him, and turning those who have **rejected** Him to their own **destruction**.

I'm sure from your own fishing experience you know that fish won't **bite** unless the **time** is right. That's why **Peter** wondered about Jesus' suggestion to go fishing at **noon**. The best time to fish is in the early **morning** or early **evening**, because the fish have to be **hungry**. Well, the

time was **definitely** right for winning **souls**, when Jesus came into the world as a **man**. God sent Him when the time was **just right** - at the time He had specifically **chosen**. The people were truly **hungry** for the message which Jesus brought, and He did not delay in **delivering** that message to them.

That reminds me of something **else** I remember about fishing with my father. He always seemed to have the right **bait**, and he had a knack for **delivering** it in the right **way**. If there were **sunfish** nearby, Dad always seemed to have a **worm** on a **cane** pole. If there was a nice **northern** pike in the area, he would be trolling with a **daredevil** on his line. If we were passing over a school of **crappies**, Dad was fishing with either a **minnow**, or the right size and color **jig**. He was pretty good at catching **fish**. But **Jesus** is even **better** at catching **souls**. And when it comes to **bait**, Jesus takes away all the **guesswork**. He **never** changes baits. He **always** uses the Word of God - and it **never fails**. He may **deliver** it in a slightly different **way** - sometimes faster, sometimes slower. Or He may deliver it from a slightly different **place**. In fact, Jesus could and **did** make almost **anything** serve as His pulpit. He could preach in a **synagogue**, or in a **Temple**; He could preach on a **mountainside** or in a **desert**; He could preach as He was walking along the **road**, or as He did in our text, He could even preach from a **boat**. Wherever the people **were**, Jesus brought them the **Word of God** which they so desperately **needed**.

He does it for **you** too. When you have a problem, turn to **Jesus** for help. When you are disgusted, turn to **Jesus** to improve your attitude. When you don't know where to turn, remember that **Jesus** always has what you need. **Go Fishing** with Jesus, and you'll find out, like the disciples in our text, that the **blessings** are **overflowing**. Precious **souls** will be gathered into His kingdom, and your **own** soul will be greatly strengthened. Amen.