

YOU WILL CATCH MEN

Luke 5:1-11

Key Verse: 5:10b

"Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.'"

After defeating the devil's temptations, Jesus began his earthly messianic ministry. Mainly, Jesus taught the word of God and healed the sick out of his compassion. But the healing was for the sake of teaching the word of God. In 5:1-11, Jesus calls Simon the fisherman as one of his first disciples. Jesus prayed all night and chose his disciples to train them at the outset of his gospel ministry. From this passage, we learn what kind of person Jesus calls and what the purpose of his calling is.

First, Jesus teaches the word of God to the crowd of people (1-3).

One day, early in the morning, Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, praying, as was his custom (Mk 1:35). This lake appears in the Gospels many times. It had three names: the Sea of Galilee, the Sea of Tiberias and the Lake of Gennesaret. It is three miles long and seven miles wide. It lies deep in the earth's surface, 680 feet below sea level. Its low elevation gives it an almost tropical climate, a climate which must have decorated the lovely plain of Gennesaret on the west side of the lake. Nowadays, the area is almost deserted, but this lake remains beautiful forever, for this is the seashore where Jesus called Simon, and it is where the Risen Jesus again visited him and cooked a delicious breakfast for him.

Out of nowhere, the lovely calm of the lake was disturbed by a crowd of people. From early in the morning, many people began coming to Jesus. Soon, they formed a multitude. This multitude of people crowded around Jesus for his help. Why did they come to Jesus from early in the morning? Needless to say, people came to him for healing. As the gospels narrate, they were mostly sick and needy people. Probably they were depression patients or discontented, and all kinds of invalids who were too pitiful to look at. There must have been lepers secretly following behind the crowd, covering their faces with their rake-like fingers, wishing to be touched by the Messiah's hand of healing. Their needs were so urgent that they could not think about others at all.

But to Luke the historian, although they looked wretched and imposing, they too were human beings who needed the Messiah's hand of healing. Of course, Jesus knew that they needed physical healing. But Jesus taught them the word of God first so as to heal their spiritual sickness first. How did they respond to his teaching? Verse 1b says, "...with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God." To our surprise, they were enthusiastic to hear his word. They came to Jesus to be healed of their various physical diseases. But when Jesus taught them the word of God first, they were not grumpy; they were happy to listen to Jesus. They looked like thirsty deer, drinking the fresh water of an oasis in the desert. Jesus knew that they were miserable because they were physically sick. Moreover, they were even more miserable because they were sick with sins. So Jesus taught them the word of God to heal them from their sinsickness.

The word of God is the word of life. 2 Timothy 3:15 says, "...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." The word of God nurtures a person to grow up to be a godly, wholesome person and wise enough to receive salvation, eternal life, and the kingdom of God. Paul experienced that he could sing and write poems when he had the word of God in his heart. So Paul said in Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." These days there are many physical-pleasure-seeking people. They claim that they are happy. But in reality, they are sick with sin and exhausted with their lives of sin. They long for the word of eternal life because they too are human beings whose souls are like stars twinkling in the sky. From time to time, we think it is not necessary to teach the Bible to those who look already washed up. But we must teach the Bible to all kinds of people, because our Lord Jesus Christ did so, believing that the word of God heals those who are very sick with sins.

The people listening to the word of God became so many that the seashore could not hold them all. Jesus realized the danger of being pushed into the water. The situation was desperate. Jesus saw that two boats had been left at the water's edge by fishermen. Simon, who was indifferent to the crowd of people in commotion, was unlikely to cooperate with Jesus' request. The crowd of people were bustling around Jesus, but Simon did not mind; he only did what he should do. When Jesus asked a favor of him, saying, "Would you put out a little from shore?" Simon nodded his head as the expression of "Okay." Jesus got in the boat and sat down and taught the people continually.

During this short encounter, Simon was obviously moved by Jesus'

humbleness in asking a favor of him, even when he looked like a difficult person to talk with. Simon could not be indifferent to Jesus any more. The more he tried not to look at Jesus, the more his eyes were fixed on Jesus. Simon felt that he was the closest friend to Jesus. This mysterious relationship lasted forever. May God give us a humble heart like Jesus to ask a favor from others so that we can make many friends with others.

Second, put out into deep water (4-7).

This part tells us how Jesus tested Simon in the hope of choosing him as one of his disciples. What kind of person was Simon? First of all, Simon was a hardworking man. Simon and his fellow fishermen worked hard all night and didn't catch anything (5a). It had been a bad night for them. Now, they were weary and hungry. So Simon could have gone home and eaten and slept first to be restored from his tiredness and discouragement. But he didn't go back home. Simon mended and rearranged his nets for a new day's work. In short, Simon the fisherman was a hardworking man and a man of no discouragement.

When we study Genesis, we learn that God made man to work hard. For example, God made the world and everything in it and asked Adam to name all the animals in it. What a hard work God had assigned to Adam! Even giving names to several children is not easy. So many people just imitate others' names: Bob, John or Mark and so on. But God asked Adam to name each animal with a different name. It was a tremendous imposition. However, this is God's truth. One boy who had been overprotected became weak. But after Bible study, he overcame many of his bad habits and studied wholeheartedly. As a result, he got an A for the first time in his life. Paul said, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2Th 3:10). Simon had the quality to become a great man of God because of his hardworking spirit.

Simon also had a learning mind. Look at verse 4. "When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'" As far as fishing was concerned, Simon was a veteran fisherman and Jesus was a junior carpenter. Night was the time for fishing, and now it was bright morning. But Simon did not say, "What do you know about fishing, you junior carpenter?" Amazingly, Simon humbled himself and was willing to learn fishing from a junior carpenter. He said, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets" (5). Although he had no formal education, he had a great learning mind. This enabled him to grow up to be the greatest teacher who ever lived in history. One of God's blessings upon mankind is that he made man to grow endlessly through a learning mind. A learning mind gives

man a new day and a new knowledge and a new life every day. A learning mind is the gift of God.

To our surprise, Simon had an obedient mind. A learning mind is the source of obedience. Obedience is also the expression of love. John 14:21a says, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." When Jesus said, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch," Simon obeyed Jesus' command unconditionally. It was because Simon Peter fell in love with Jesus. We don't know why he fell in love with Jesus. Probably Simon felt that Jesus recognized him as the best leadership material in the whole world. It was true that Jesus saw him to be so, as history testifies. One who loves God can obey God and can obey others. It is not easy for anybody to obey. But Simon obeyed Jesus' word.

What was the result when Simon obeyed? Look at verses 6-7. "When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink." When Simon obeyed, Jesus restored him from his failure. Jesus enabled him to experience a great success. There's no failure in Jesus. Jesus restores all our failures. Amen.

Finally, Simon came to know that he was a sinner. Look at verse 8. "When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'" Why did Simon cry out like this? After Simon had a great catch of fish, he saw God Almighty in Jesus (8). He saw that even the fish in the sea obeyed Jesus' word. In the past, Simon had no concept of God, not to mention a concept of sin. But after meeting Jesus, he could see God in Jesus. Also, he realized that he was a sinful man. In the past, he thought he was a good man. But when he met Jesus, he realized that he was a sinful man.

What kind of sinful man was he? First, before God, he was a morally sinful man. Nobody can say that he has kept all the Ten Commandments. Maybe he had violated all the Ten Commandments one by one. In order to eat three meals a day, Simon became a selfish man, so he was a morally sinful man. Second, Simon was an ethically sinful man. He never cared for others. Third, Simon was a spiritually sinful man. Simon did not live for the glory of God. Instead, he lived a selfish life. At the moment he met Jesus, he saw God in Jesus. Before Jesus, he felt like dying. So he cried out, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" This realization made him a truly humble and great man in history.

Look at verse 10b. "Don't be afraid..." Jesus saw his inner man. Outwardly, Simon looked bold as a man of the sea. But inwardly he was a slave of fear because

of his sins. Simon may have said, "How long do I have to work in the night sea? What do I do if I get sick and die?" Those who are outside of Jesus are all slaves of fear (Ro 8:15). But those who are in Jesus are full of love and power (2Ti 1:7). As soon as Simon heard Jesus' voice, all his fear was gone and God's peace was overflowing in him.

Third, "from now on you will catch men" (10-11).

Look at verse 10b. "Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.'" What does it mean, "from now on you will catch men"? Matthew and Mark said, "fishers of men," instead of "catch men" (Mt 4:19; Mk 1:17). It is better to think a little more about "from now on you will catch men."

First, God gave him new life in Jesus. In the past, Simon was a fisherman. People thought he was a courageous man of the sea and the leader of all fishermen, at least in the Galilean district. But inwardly he was very fearful and sorrowful. One night, he tried all night to catch fish but he caught nothing. Nevertheless, Jesus showed him God by restoring his great failure of catching fish. Before conversion, Peter was a smelly fisherman, a very sorrowful man. Before conversion, Peter was a smelly fisherman and a sorrowful man and a really wounded man (1Pe 2:24). Since Jesus came into his heart, he became a happy man.

Second, "from now on you will catch men." This meant you will be my disciple. When we read gospel stories very carefully, from the outset of the gospel ministry Jesus called his first disciples. Through common life together, Jesus taught them that he is God through his healing and teaching and by many miracles. Once, Jesus gave them a test, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered immediately, "The Christ of God" (Lk 9:20). Outwardly, Peter looked as though he were learning nothing. But through Jesus, Peter came to know that Jesus is the Christ of God, which means Jesus is the King who destroyed the power of sin and death through his death and resurrection. In this way, Jesus became our eternal King.

Third, "from now on you will catch men." This meant you should be a shepherd of God's flock of sheep. Once Jesus went on a retreat with his disciples to a quiet place. But the crowd of people came to him for help. They were really shameless people. But when Jesus saw the crowd of people they were like sheep without a shepherd (Mk 6:34). In other words, they could have been much better people, but because they did not have shepherds they became wretched people. When we study the gospel narratives, Peter was a domineering character. But he was raised as a shepherd of God's flock of sheep in the early Christian days. Peter said, "Be

shepherds of God's flock that is under your care" (1Pe 5:2).

Fourth, "from now on you will catch men." This meant Peter will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation and a man who is responsible for the world evangelization to declare the marvelous grace of Jesus (1Pe 2:9-10). Jesus also wanted to establish him as the foundation stone of the Christian church (Mt 16:18).

What was Peter's response to Jesus' calling? Look at verse 11. "So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him." Before meeting Jesus, Peter was in the darkness of the sea with great fear. After meeting Jesus, he was to be the shepherd of God's flock under his care in the early church.