

## **Jesus Calls Simon to Fish for People** (Jesus' vision for Simon Peter)

Luke 5:1-11

Key verse 5:10b “Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’”

Today's passage is Jesus' calling of the first four disciples, in particular, Simon Peter. In response to his call, these men left everything, their homes, families, and careers to follow Jesus. But what, in Jesus' calling, captivated Simon Peter to make such a radical decision? In these verses, we see Jesus reeling Simon into an ever deeper relationship with him, through a series of three challenges. While responding to Jesus' challenges in obedience, Simon Peter finds the Almighty God in Jesus who alone knows him, accepts him, and has a great hope for him. Through this message, may we also hear Jesus' calling and respond in obedience, and experience his power, love, and vision for each of us.

### **Part I. “Put out into deep water...” (1-7)**

One day, while Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the sick, needy, and hungry people crowded around him and pressed him to the water's edge. What did Jesus do for them? Look at verses 2-3. **“He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.”** Jesus taught the crowd the word of God.

In these verses, we also witness Jesus' intervention in Simon's life by getting into his boat. Of course, Jesus needed his boat to teach the crowd without being pushed into the water. As we read this story further, however, we can see that Jesus had another reason in doing so! Before we discover it, let's review briefly Jesus' relationship with Simon. In the previous chapter, after Jesus healed a man possessed by a demon in the synagogue, he went to Simon's house and healed his mother-in-law. Afterwards, from sunset of the same day, Jesus healed all kinds of sick people there in Simon's house. All of these facts imply that Simon had some relationship with Jesus.

After his amazing experiences with Jesus on the Sabbath, what was Simon doing now? After the weekend full of church activities, he went back to his regular life and routine as a fisherman. He went fishing all night, and in the morning, he was washing his nets, while Jesus was teaching the crowd at the seashore. He seemed indifferent to Jesus and his ministry. Why was he just washing his nets? Because that's what a faithful fisherman did after a night of fishing! Later, we learn Simon had worked very hard the night before and had caught nothing. Rather than going home in despair he got his nets ready for the next catch. No matter what was going on around him, Simon was focused, single-minded, and hard-working. Perhaps, Simon had two mortgages to pay, one for his house and the other for his boat. This is the brief description of Simon's relationship-- Jesus did his thing, and Simon did his thing. While Simon kept washing his nets, however, Jesus was not indifferent to Simon. Jesus got into his boat and asked him gently, challenge #1, “Simon, would you put out a little from shore? I need your help!” Jesus was intervening in Simon's busy and indifferent life by stepping into his boat.

What was Simon's response to Jesus' first gentle request? He simply did it. “It's not a big deal.

He healed my mother-in-law.” Some of you must have said to your Bible teacher, “An Easter Bible conference? I will be there. I am a nice person!” Simon, however, through this small act of obedience, had a chance to listen to Jesus' teaching. When he began to listen to Jesus' words, the power of his teachings was working in his heart. As he listened, he came to see Jesus, not as an ordinary man, but the Master, whose words must be obeyed.

Then, Jesus gave a second challenge to Simon! Let's read verse 4. **“When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’”** After a long and hard night's work, Simon must have expected to go home and reward himself with a big breakfast and a long nap. But Jesus said to him, **“Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”** Why did Jesus bother exhausted Simon?

Jesus, while teaching the crowds, was actually focused on Simon. Jesus knew Simon's situation: his nets were empty despite his hard work. Simon had failed as a fisherman. But Jesus had compassion on him. He wanted to restore him from his failure. However, Jesus' compassion came to Simon in the form of a challenge. Jesus was commanding him to put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch all over again. Jesus was challenging him to obey Jesus, over his own ideas, experience, and pride.

How did Simon respond to Jesus' challenge? Let's read verse 5. **“Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’”** The first part of Simon's answer, **“Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything...”** shows a considerable amount of his reluctance and struggle in obeying Jesus. He had worked hard. He had done his best employing all his past experience and skills as a veteran fisherman. However, he caught nothing. What difference would it make to go out fishing once again? In this bright morning, the fish would see his nets! In fact, he would just have to wash his nets all over again. A sense of failure and futility pressed down on him.

On the other hand, there was a voice that spoke into his heart irresistibly: How sweet and beautiful are his teachings! What authority and power his words have! After a brief but intense struggle, Simon made a willful decision to obey Jesus and his words. **“But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”** In deciding to obey Jesus' words, not only was he putting out his nets into deep water, he was also putting himself, leaping out into deep water, as well. He was stepping out from himself, his familiar routines of life, and his human reasoning and common sense. He was choosing to obey Jesus over himself. Obeying Jesus was frightening but exhilarating as well.

What happened when he chose to obey Jesus' words? 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 he obeyed Jesus, he experienced the greatest catch of his life, to the over-abundance that both his boat and his partners' boat began to sink! When he obeyed Jesus' words, he experienced such an overwhelming blessing and supernatural power beyond his imagination. Jesus more than restored all of his failures as a fisherman. Some times we think, if we experience Jesus' power and blessing and restoration of failure first, then we will obey him. However, it rarely works that way. Do you want to experience his power and restoration of failure? Yes? Then even when his words make no sense and are hard to obey, and hard to believe that anything good will happen- just obey Jesus' words- **“Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.”** And when we obey, we will experience that indeed his words are true, and that he indeed is Almighty God, who blesses us and restores all our failures.

## Part II. “You will fish for people” (8-11).

How did Simon Peter respond to this wealth of fish? Look at verses 8-10a. **“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, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.”** Among them, however, Simon Peter made an amazing confession to Jesus. He fell at Jesus' knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” From these verses we see that his obedience and experiencing Christ’s power, led him to a turning point in his view of himself and his relationship with Christ. Firstly, the author began to call Simon, Simon Peter, the new name that Jesus gave him. Simon’s identity changes from his old identity as Simon (which means “sand”), to his new identity as Simon Peter (which means “Rock”). When we also obey and experience the power of Christ, we are changed by Christ. We belong to him and he changes us according to his vision and hope. He no longer sees us as sand, but as the rock for his church.

And in this confession, we see two essential elements of his new relationship with Christ. First, Simon Peter met Jesus as the Lord, the Creator, the Master of the fish and the sea. He no longer saw Jesus as just a good teacher. He saw Jesus as the Almighty God who could draft such a large number of fish at once into his nets. When we obey Christ and his words, only then do we experience that Jesus is God, Creator of the heavens and the earth. Secondly, through his obedience to Jesus' words, Simon Peter saw the Holy God in Jesus and himself as a sinful man. Though Simon may not have lived an overtly immoral life, in the course of struggling to respond to Jesus' challenges, his sins were exposed. He was a self-reliant sinner. The motto of his life was, “I take care of myself and my family. I am the captain of my life and boat.” He was also ignorant of God and his power and even indifferent to God. He was simply a practical atheist who had attended all kinds of religious activities but who did not know the living Almighty God personally. When he saw the holy God in Jesus and himself as a sinful man, all he could do was fall at Christ’ feet and cry out in holy fear and trembling, **“Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”** He could not but surrender to the Holy God and fall at his feet in worship and reverence.

How did Jesus respond? Let's read verse 10b. **“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’”** Jesus, the Almighty Creator God, who is holy, holy, holy-- didn't turn away from him or run away from him or destroy him. Instead, Jesus said to him, “Simon, 'Don't be afraid.” He embraced him with comfort and forgiveness of sins. Jesus accepted Peter. In fact, Holy Almighty Jesus came to Peter first- he stepped into his fishing boat and cared about him so personally that he restored his failures at fishing. Holy Almighty Jesus wanted to have a deep personal relationship with sinful Simon Peter. His love and mercy melted Simon Peter's heart. Holy Almighty Jesus wants to have a deep personal relationship with you and me, even though we are sinners who deserve only his wrath.

More surprisingly, Jesus said to Simon Peter, **“From now on you will fish for people.”** Here comes Jesus' third challenge! When I read this part first, I said to myself, “Wow, wow! Slow down, Jesus! It's too soon to give such a heavy mission to a recent convert!” I thought that Jesus was commanding him to go fishing; you know what we mean by saying, “fishing.” But I was wrong. Jesus'

third challenge was his amazing vision and promise for hopeless and sinful Peter. Peter was an unschooled fisherman, living a hand to mouth existence. When he got married and had kids and a sick mother-in-law to support, life got tougher. In his own situation, his only hope was that after a hard night of work, he could have a good meal or watch a romantic K-drama with a cool beer. What was worse, as he stood before Jesus, Simon Peter knew how sinful and unworthy he was.

However, Jesus promised this Simon Peter, that he would fish for people. In the same way that they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break, Jesus was saying to Simon Peter, “Don’t you see and touch these fish? Does this miracle amaze you? This is nothing, Peter! You shall see and do greater things than this. From now on you will fish for people! When you simply obey me and learn from me, I will bring numerous people into your care. I will entrust to you my sheep whom I bought with my blood! I will make you a source of blessing for all people of all nations. You will make disciples of all nations, and be the rock on which I will build my church. I am calling you into myself and my work on earth.” What a challenge and vision Jesus had for Peter!

When Simon Peter heard Jesus' hope and promise for him, he didn't go home saying, “Jesus! Thanks, but I must tell my wife first.” When he saw the glimpse of Jesus' vision for himself, he held onto it, not looking at himself and his own inadequacies and inabilities. He put his trust in Jesus who could make him into a fisher of men because Jesus is the Creator God. Therefore, he made an immediate and joyful decision. Verse 11 says. **“So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”** He surrendered himself and his future into Jesus' hands to follow Jesus unreservedly. From then on, Peter's relationship with Jesus began to grow and grow, as Jesus spent time teaching him, training him, equipping him and rebuking him. He became a witness of Jesus' life, his teachings, his death and resurrection. Peter became a master fisher of men like his Lord Jesus, a shepherd for the early church.

Some of you may wonder whether Jesus has called you to fish for people or not. What does the Bible say about this matter? Apostle Paul says in 1Thessalonians 1:4-5a, **“For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction...”** Each one of you who has received the gospel, the death and resurrection of Jesus as the power and wisdom of God, is chosen before the creation of the world in Christ (Eph 1:4). Every one of you who has received the Holy Spirit and conviction of God’s forgiveness of your sins and his sonship is called by God to live a holy and missional life on earth. In a word, everybody who has received the gospel call has received Jesus’ salvation, His Great Command and Great Commission. Now to those who have received Christ as their Lord and Savior, the truth is that Jesus has called you to fish for people, no doubt! Therefore, will you obey his call out of thankfulness and joy?

Jesus' vision for Peter also newly moves me. It reminds me of God's personal calling for me based on Jeremiah 1:5, **“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”** In obedience to this verse, I left my family and my country to be a missionary to the USA in 1996. Recently I have become discouraged by my physical weaknesses and could not see God fulfilling his promises to me. Should I keep living in obedience to his vision and his words to me? Last Saturday, my fellowship hosted a gender reveal party for Joseph and Monica’s family: It’s a boy! We had a good time. By God’s grace, I could see my living room full of fish from many nations- America, India, Philippines, China, Mexico and Korea. God has brought all kinds of fish into my nets. Before I saw God’s vision in my living room, I felt like my life as a fisher of men was almost over because of my physical weaknesses. But it is not true. God’s call and gifts are irrevocable (Ro 11:29). God has called me as a prophet to the nations- a fisher of people, and

God is working to make me into a prophet to the nations. Amen. I saw another revelation from that party. I had thought that I should be a fisher of people by myself. But this one party taught me that nobody should and can become a fisher of people by themselves. In fact, my wife is with me. My family is with me. My partners in Christ are with me. Jesus' church is with me. Our Lord Jesus Christ has formed a loving and spirit-filled fellowship among us. Most of all, our Lord Jesus Christ is in our midst as our captain. I am convinced that our fishing nets are bound in love and are ready to be put down into deep water and rescue the perishing from the sea of wounds, hurts, sins and death. Thank God for renewing his call upon me! I see many of you living as fishers of people. Thank God! Blessed are those who obey Jesus' vision and live it.

Through this message, we have thought about how Jesus called Simon Peter, who was a sinful and ordinary man. However, when he obeyed Jesus' words and followed Jesus, Jesus made him a fisher of people. Like Peter, Fishers of people are not born, but called and made by Jesus when we follow him and obey his challenges personally and collectively as a church. Can you hear Jesus saying, **“Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch?”** Do you hear his voice of vision also, **“From now on you will fish for people”**? If so, let us hear and obey his commands. As we obey our Lord's voice, may we experience Jesus' power and abundant victory. May we experience a deeper love relationship with our Holy and Almighty and loving God. And may we see his vision making us into fishers of people, who are used to rescue people from the sea of death.