

YOU WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE

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.’”

The title of the message this morning is “You will fish for people”. It is about the calling of the first disciples. In particular, it is about Jesus’ calling upon Simon Peter. We are very familiar with this passage, since it is one of the well-known passages in the Bible. Usually we think it is for unbelievers or young believers who have started his Christian lives. However, this passage is still applicable for mature Christians who lived Christian lives more than 20 years. It is because this passage shows God’s vision and hope for all people including us. Through this passage, let’s think about the meaning of Jesus’ calling upon Peter and His hope for his disciples including us.

Part I. Jesus intentionally got into the boat of Simon Peter (1-3).

Look at verse 1: “One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God.” The Lake of Gennesaret is the same as the Lake of Galilee but on the side of Gennesaret. When Jesus came to the town, the crowd of people gathered around Jesus. Probably, they brought sick people, because they heard about Jesus’ healing power from other towns. Jesus was preaching the good news of the kingdom of God to them. The crowd of people did not leave but carefully listened to the word of God. The word of God from Jesus was like a sweet honey to their ears and quenched their thirsty

soul. It was life-giving, healing their hearts and minds. It gave them the hope of God's kingdom and eternal life.

Look at verses 2 and 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 saw some fishermen washing their nets. According to the verse 10, they were at least Peter, John, and James. They had already known Jesus. In Luke 4, we see that Jesus visited Simon's house and healed his mother-in-law from a high fever (4:38-39). They saw many people hearing Jesus' words, but they were preoccupied with their jobs. They were washing their nets after long night-fishing. They might just look forward to finishing the job so that they could get some rest.

However, Jesus wanted to involve them in his teaching so that he asked Simon to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. Jesus had two reasons in doing this. Maybe Jesus needed to some space in order to teach the large number of people, not falling into the water. But Jesus had more important reason in doing so. It was Simon who needed to listen to the word of God. Jesus 'intentionally' approached Simon Peter. Before Jesus approached him, Peter might concern about his fishing business: how to get more fish; or he might also think about his family: what to say his wife, and so on. However, thank God for Jesus who showed his care and heart for Peter and invited him in his preaching. It was like a small yet very powerful bible conference in the boat. Peter probably heard about God's kingdom. After hearing Jesus' teaching, he might think about God and His Kingdom. He might also think about his life; past, present, and future. He might think about the purpose and meaning of his life as well. This Jesus' heart and care to Peter are the same to us. First of all, we thank God for his invitation for

us to this summer conference. We all are pretty busy with our family issues, children, health, jobs, maybe retirement, and so on. However, Jesus invited each of us to this conference. Jesus wants us to hear about his life giving words away from our mundane life. Imagine that JMU is like a big boat and we are here in the boat with Jesus. We will hear total 8 wonderful messages and 17 sincere life testimonies during this conference. Besides, we will have sport, eating and chatting fellowship with our dear coworkers for 3 nights and 4 days. Through this Jesus' invitation to this conference, we may also hear about God' kingdom and find the way and the truth and the life in Jesus Christ.

Part II. "Put out into deep water" (4-7).

Look at verse 4. "Then he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." When he finished his teaching, Jesus turned his attention to Simon and challenged him. Jesus asked Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." What Jesus asked was very unusual. There are at least two issues in Jesus' request; time and place. It was in the morning. Fishing with nets was hard work; it meant working long hours, often all night. It was common knowledge that it was not the time to start fishing but to close and go home. Moreover, in the lake of Galilee, no fish lives in deep water because there is nothing for a fish to eat, so usually fishermen knows the depth of water to catch certain kind of fish. It seems what Jesus told to Simon does not make sense to an experienced fisherman. Most of all, Peter could ignore Jesus' words out of pride. Jesus was a carpenter and maybe a nice Bible teacher, while Simon was a veteran fisherman, whose profession was to catch fish.

Then, what was Simon's response? Look at verse 5a, "Simon answered, 'Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything.'" Simon had all the reasons not to listen to Jesus. He might laugh at Jesus, saying, "What do you know about fishing, Jesus? What you said is totally nonsense." However, he did not stop there. Look at verse 5b, "But because you say so, I will let down the nets for a catch." Amazingly, he denied all the facts and knowledges he had. He said, "Because you say so, I will let down the nets for a catch". Amazing! How could he do that? By faith, he accepted Jesus as his Master and relied on his words. While listening to Jesus' words on the boat, he opened his heart and put his faith in Jesus. "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ (Rom 10:17)." Even though he had a lot of weaknesses to be called as Jesus' disciple, the secret of Peter's greatness is 'in his attitude' to Jesus' words. He honored Jesus as his Master. He respected Jesus' words, overcoming his own opinion. This shows his humility and learning mind. Simon obeyed at Jesus' words because Jesus said so. God's people obey at his words and experience the great work of God. For example, Abraham in Genesis obeyed God because God said so and went from his country to the land God would show him, even though there were many reasons not to go from his country. Moses obeyed because God said so and left Egypt and passed through the Red Sea. The centurion in the gospel of Matthew (Mt 8:13), with "Just say the word" faith, experienced Jesus' miracle to heal his servant. Accepting God's words "as they are and obeying them" are the great act of faith. When person reaches in their 40s or 50s, there is no "maybe". They become wiser by knowing all the things in the world through life experiences. Likewise, we all are respected father, mother, employees, friends, coworkers, and experienced Bible teachers. However, most of time we need such a faith like Simon by saying "Because Jesus say so". We need a faith to depend on God's words in whatever we do regardless of our experiences or ideas.

Then, what happened when he threw the nets into deep water? Look at verses 6 and 7. He and his partners caught a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled for help from their fishing partners, and they filled two boats so full that they began to sink. When Peter obeyed to Jesus' words, he could experience a great success and begin to experience the power of Jesus' words. Simon's obedience to Jesus' words brings God's overflowing blessings and success. God blesses people who act with faith in His words. I thank God for his challenge for me to go into the deep spiritual realm though my practical life struggles. M. Pauline and I worked so hard like Simon yet we experienced empty net while I was in MBA study. Basically everything is 'No' in our net. No money because M. Pauline lost her job. No scholarship, No baby, no visible sheep, and the father-in-law's sickness in Korea. I felt like I was going through a dark tunnel. During those times M. Pauline and I hold onto the word of God. Even though I was not able to change any things, I encouraged M. Pauline to believe God's goodness and love for me and my family first, based on Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." We honestly prayed for His mercy and grace upon our family and believed in God's goodness and love based on the words of God, Romans 8:28. Then God resolved our life issues one by one. God gave us a sign of his goodness through the birth of our son Paul. God enabled me to get into my PhD program with full scholarship and healed the father-in-law from the stroke. When I depended on God "at his word" (Rom 8:28), he enabled me to experience his wonderful work and grow my personal faith in him & his words. God blesses those who obey him at his words. May we experience God's wonderful miracles through obeying him "at his words".

Part III. From now on you will fish for people (8-11).

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!’” Simon’s response was quite extraordinary. Instead of thanking Jesus or having joy at the great catch of fish, Simon said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” Simon Peter fell at Jesus’ knees. Before the miracle he experienced, he had called Jesus “Master”, but now he called him “Lord”. By obeying Jesus’ word and experiencing God’s power, he realized that Jesus is God Almighty who even controls the fish in the sea. Simon had a glimpse of God’s holiness; he realized that before Jesus he was nothing but a lowly sinner. Simon perhaps could have thought that he was better than this or that person. He was hard working, respectable, and moral. He didn’t harm others like the tax collectors. But before Jesus holy and divine nature, he found how groundless his pride and righteousness were. He found himself utterly unworthy. Even he might feel Jesus’ intention and approach to call him one of his disciples, yet he realized that he was not qualified for Jesus’ work. So he said, “Lord, I am a sinner. How can I be your disciple?” He couldn’t but kneel at Jesus’ feet. In our Christian lives, we need to experience God’s holy presence upon us. If possible, everyday. When we stand before God and His holy presence, we acknowledge ourselves as wretched sinners. Even, the Apostle Paul experienced the holy presence of God and confessed, “What a wretched sinner I am” (Rom 7:24).

Then what was Jesus’ response to him? Look at verse 10b. “Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’” Jesus took away his fear by forgiving his sins. Moreover, he called him as his disciple by saying, “from now on you will fish for people.” Here, “from now on” is the opposite of “until now.” Until now, Simon caught fish to ‘make a living’, eating three meals a day and feeding his family. It involved hard work, sleepless nights and sometimes

empty hands. Peter worked hard for his family as a head of household and a husband. Peter's life is not a selfish from the human point of view, but he worked only for a living. Working hard only for a living would be meaningless. But from now on, Jesus invited him to live a life of mission. Peter no longer worked hard only for a living but lived for God's glory. Simon would be a man of mission who can serve others beyond his family. Fishing for people means "to do what Jesus did", reach out to all kinds of people who do not have a right relationship with God and bring them back to Him and to his kingdom. This is Jesus' hope for him to be a shepherd of God's flock (1Pet 5:2). This is Jesus' vision for him to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (1Pet 2:9). Through Jesus' calling, Simon Peter became responsible for God's work of world salvation. He became the foundation stone of the Christian church (Mt 16:18). This hope of God is not only for Peter, but also for everybody including us. God want us to be his faithful co-workers who can lead people to Him. God wants us to have a bigger scale to embrace many needy people around us beyond our current issues. He desires us to continue to experience his presence in our practical lives through obedience at his words. Moreover, God wants us to grow in his image and become shepherds of his flock, like the Apostle Peter.

Daniel 12:3 said, "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." God promises that those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars for ever and ever. May we continue to live by faith and obey him at his words of promises so that we may shine like the stars forever and ever. May God help us to have the spiritual power to lead people to him and use us for his wonderful salvation work for the world. As God's servants, we accepted God's calling and lived for the campus mission more than 20 years. We have experienced God's

hands and his work upon our lives through our obedience to his words. May God help us to be blessings to others by leading people to Him who is the way and the truth and the life. May we think about God' calling and hope upon us and recommit ourselves to God and his calling.

Look at verse 11. "So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him." How did Simon Peter respond to Jesus' calling? Simon's deep respect for Jesus again translated into action and obedience. He and his companions made a clear and immediate decision. They didn't calculate or hesitate. They made this commitment not to use Jesus for what they wanted, but to truly follow him for what he wanted. Following Jesus requires our decision and commitment to Christ.

In conclusion, through this passage, we thought about Jesus' calling upon Simon Peter. Jesus called him with vision and hope to be a shepherd for his flock and a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Jesus called each of us as well with this vision and hope. May God help us accept his will upon us personally and obey Jesus' command so that we may experience true joy with clear life meaning and purpose. May God help us not only work for a living but also live a life with mission for his glory so that we may have the image of Jesus and be the pleasing aroma of Christ among people. Let's read the key verse 10b. "Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.'"