

## FROM NOW ON YOU WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE

Luke 5:1-11

Key Verse: 10b

“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’”

Do you know how many high school baseball players in America? There are about 455, 300 players. However, only 5 percent can play on collegiate teams. Then, MLB teams draft only 10 percent of players in collegiate teams. And of all minor leaguers, only 10 percent can play in major league when they receive call up from the team. This means that the majority of players end their careers without playing in major league.

In 1994, 21 years old, a Korean young pitcher Chanho-park became a first Korean major leaguer and started his career at Los Angeles dodgers. Even though he could throw a high speed ball, his control was unstable and did not receive much attention from many Korean teams. But, Peter O’Malley, the president of LA dodgers recognized Park’s great potential and called him up to major league directly. Peter O’Malley mentioned that he had confidence about Park’s success in major league and waited and supported him until Park became a one of top pitchers in National League. Then, Park set a milestone by earning the 124<sup>th</sup> victory of his 17- year career to mark the most wins by an Asian-born pitcher.

Today, we want to talk about the great calling from Jesus upon an ordinary and unnoticed fisherman, Simon Peter. This calling changed his life direction and made him a great spiritual leader in human history. Through this passage, let us hear Jesus’ call personally and learn what the purpose of his calling is.

First, Jesus visited Peter (1-3). One day, early in the morning, Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, probably after his morning prayer. Seeing Jesus by the lake, many people flocked around him and listened to his words. What a beautiful picture it is—a morning Bible study by the lake with Jesus. Now the people listening to the word of God became so many that the seashore could not hold them all. Then Jesus saw that two boats

had been left at the water's edge by fishermen who were washing their nets. Jesus got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon. Jesus asked him a favor saying, "Would you put out a little from shore?" Simon who was busy with washing the nets nodded his head and did as Jesus had asked him. Then Jesus sat down and taught the people from the boat. **Apparently, Jesus asked Peter to use his boat, but Jesus visited Peter to give him the word of God and invited him to the kingdom of God.**

Second, put out into deep water (4-7). Simon was tired after a long night of fishing without catching any fish. Simon must have patiently waited for the end of Jesus' Bible study in his boat. 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.'"** I wonder how Simon responded to this request or command at first. As far as fishing is concerned, Simon was an expert, and Jesus was a young carpenter. Simon could have become angry and retorted, "Don't you know that the best fishing is to be done at night around shallow water?" To Simon, it seemed that Jesus commanded out of inexperience and lack of knowledge about fishing. Jesus also knew that the best time for fishing was the night time around the shallow water.

**Why then did Jesus command Simon to let down the nets in deep water?** It is not because Jesus wanted make Simon's life very difficult and ashamed but help him to know who Jesus truly is. Figuratively speaking, Simon had been living in the shallow water. He didn't go beyond his own understanding. He thought that he would be able to support himself and his family very well. But, the end result was empty nets, and he would go home with nothing. People stay in the shallow water for most of their lives. They only live based on what they understand. They know they need to pay the bills so they strive to secure a good job. In all things, they operate according to their own understanding and rarely if ever go beyond that. However, when you live in the shallow waters the result is an empty net at the end of your life.

How did Simon respond to Jesus' command? Look at 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.”** He already cleaned up his nets. Physically he was tired and did not work any more at that time. Moreover, Jesus command was not acceptable based on his knowledge and experience. However, it is truly amazing that Simon humbled himself and accepted Jesus’ word. His words, “because you say so,” reveal his utter respect for Jesus and his willingness to accept Jesus’ words.

What happened when Simon obeyed? **When Simon and his companions were pulling the nets, they saw incredible number of fish and finally had to call another boat to fill it. When they simply obeyed Jesus’ word, they experienced a miracle, catching a large number of fish when it was impossible to catch even a few.** Here we learn that Jesus wanted Peter to put out his nets into deep water so that he can experience beyond human reason and understanding. **But without throwing the nets into deep water, Peter could have not experienced this miracle. In the same way, Jesus wants us to experience something beyond human reason and understanding by throwing the nets into deep water.**

Simon didn’t understand Jesus’ command in his knowledge and reason, but obeyed anyway because it was Jesus’ words. Jesus wants us to put out into deep water. Considering the audience listening to this message, many of you have probably already left your shallow waters following Jesus command, but the problem is once you've gotten used to a certain level of deep water it becomes shallow again, it becomes predictable and comfortable and you lose the feeling of needing to hold Jesus' hand every step of the way. We need to ask ourselves “in what areas am I still frightened to let Jesus touch? What areas do I fear the potential losses so much I won't follow Jesus' direction?” and then to push through that fear of the unknown, seeing what Jesus' direction is for those areas and then following him into deep waters.

We often become frustrated when the things do not go our way and our lives seems fruitless in our ministry, our job, our family, finance and so on. We want to give up and lose power to try again. Some people become fatalistic after continued failures. Disciple making is in particular not easy.

But, today's passage teaches us that though we have failed many times, we should rely on Jesus words and put out our nets into deep water by faith. When we do so, Jesus will give us a victory that is beyond our experience, reason and common sense

Third, 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!’”** After experiencing great success in his fishing, he could ask Jesus “where should I go to catch a number of fishes tomorrow?” when Jesus fed more than five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes on a mountainside, they followed and asked Jesus to make him their king. When Jesus healed the sick people, many people followed Jesus to be healed from their disease and sickness. However, Simon’s response was quite extraordinary.

He said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” Through this catch of fish Simon saw who he really was. In the book of Acts Jesus lets down a huge mat full of all kinds of unclean animals and tells Simon to kill and eat them. Simon responds “never Lord, no unclean thing has ever touched my lips” Simon was a good upright Jewish man, who obeyed the law. He must have thought he was doing so well because he never cheated on his wife or did drugs or lived a crazy lifestyle. He took care of his kids and paid his taxes. In his eyes he was a good man. But here with this catch of fish he saw who he really was, despite his law keeping, his real person was one that lived for fish. Spiritually he was naked and exposed. Before Jesus’ holy and divine nature, he found how groundless his pride and righteousness were. He found himself utterly unworthy. He couldn’t but kneel at Jesus feet.

Likewise, when we stand before the holy God we can see who we truly are. We need to have eyes to see our sinfulness—our selfishness, self-righteousness, pride, hatred and all kinds of sins in us by standing before the holy God. Then and only then, we will see that we are in absolute need of our Savior Jesus. In this sense, Peter was a true blessed man since he found him as a sinner and met Jesus as his Lord

Look at verse 10b. **“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’”** When Jesus said, “don’t be afraid,” it meant his sins are forgiven so Simon does not need to be afraid of Jesus because Jesus did not come to condemn his sins but to save him. John 3:17 says, “God did not send his Son to condemn the world but to save the world through him.” Jesus came to save Simon from his sins, so that he can be free from eternal condemnation.

In Jesus Simon’s life would be full of hope and certainty and meaning. Up until now his life was to catch fish to kill or to sell. That life was to eat three meals a day for him and for his family members. Basically, he lived for himself. But from now on Simon would fish men. He would fish men alive and for life. Jesus did not say, “You may fish men” or “You should fish for men” or “most likely you will fish for men,” but said, “...you will fish for men.” This means that you will fish for men because I call you.

Again, who is Jesus? He is the Lord, God himself. All the fish of the sea was in his control. Certainly, Simon Peter’s life would be in Jesus’ hand and in his control. It does not mean that Simon Peter’s life would be carefree or fixed. We could see that there were many ups and downs in his life in the gospel story. But Jesus was there always, especially at the critical point in his life.

When I was a college student, I did not know how to live and survive in the competitive world and suffered from a sense of inferiority since I failed university entrance exam two times and I did not get a good university. Until that time, my life was meaningless and aimless with fear and concern and I just lived for the survival. In this time, Jesus called me as a fisher for men when I was working hard to find a job before the college graduation. I simply accepted Jesus calling and decided to follow him leaving my dream and expectation from my parents. For ten years in Korea, I lived as a full-time bible teacher for campus students and came to U.S. as a missionary in 2007. Like Peter, I thought that I could follow Jesus as a good disciple and raise many disciples. However, I could not see as many fruits of my life as I expected and still in the struggle with financial issue, job security, and many other problems. I asked to myself “Am I following Jesus in a right way?” “Am

I living a life worthy of the calling I have received?" "What is the meaning of following Jesus and what kind of fruits can I bear at the end of my life?"

Last week, I attended the Msn William Jung's funeral service. Msn. William Jung was a nice, gentle, soft speaker and an excellent researcher. Few years ago, when I met his family in Boston, he shared his struggle- how to serve his ministry and how to help his family. His life had also ups and downs like me. However, through the funeral service, God revealed how faithful and fruitful his life was when Msn William followed Jesus through his life. After funeral service, co-workers, friends, and family members shared their personal story with William Jung in tears during the reception. These testimonies were heart-moving and inspiring messages greater than any other messages that I ever heard in my life. He served his co-workers with God's word. When his coworkers are in troubles, he served them with love and delicious foods and became a good friend for them. At the end of reception, moved by testimony his friend in college volunteered to share his personal story. He was an unbeliever and anti-Christian and could not understand the life of Msn William Jung as a Christian, but over the years, he also became a Christian. He mentioned that Msn William did not know his changed life and he really wanted to have a fellowship with Msn William in Christ. The life of Msn William influenced many people in many ways. His life was transformed to a fisher for men and his life became meaningful and fruitful. One thing I learned from the funeral service was that Jesus works marvelous things through those who accept his calling and follow him faithfully even though it could be unnoticed while they are on earth.

Luke describes very well how Jesus' promise would be fulfilling in Simon's life regardless of his mistakes and failures. Jesus said to Simon at the last supper, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31-32). At the very time of Jesus' trial before the high priest, Peter denied Jesus three times. However, Jesus helped Peter to remember the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times. And he went outside and wept bitterly (23:61-62). We also remember in John's gospel.

Even after Jesus' resurrection, Peter remained as a failed disciple. But Jesus visited him early in the morning on the shore of this Sea of Galilee and restored him in his unfailing love and reinstated him as a shepherd for God's flock.

So when Jesus said, "You will fish for men," Jesus was willing to protect and strengthen and restore him. Of course, this promise also includes that Peter would grow in understanding people and in shepherding and leading people to God. So what an amazing promise it is, when Jesus said, "From now on, you will fish for men." No one, but only Jesus can give such a promise. In nature, this promise is the same as the promise God gave to Abraham, "You will be a blessing" (Ge 12:2).

Following Jesus still transforms ordinary people into those who can fish many others for God's kingdom. Our God is the God of promise. He is faithful to keep his promise. Jesus was faithful to Peter, keeping his promise to him. He will be faithful to all those who believe his promise and follow him no matter what. To some of you, this is first calling from Jesus, but to many of you, this calling is wake-up call or reminding-call for his promise. I pray that we all in this room receive Jesus promise "You will fish for men" newly deep in our heart.

How did he respond? Look at verse 11. **"So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."** Simon's deep respect for Jesus again translated into action and obedience. All his companions were the same. It showed that they also accepted Jesus' promise to Simon as Jesus' promise to them too.

Thank Jesus who called Simon Peter in his great love and faithfulness. He is calling each of us. Life without calling goes nowhere and remains pitiful. But life with God's call is full of meaning and life, although it includes hardships and suffering. Jesus calls for his people to fish people from the sea of death to the sea of life. May God help us to personally respond to his words, "Put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch" and "From now on you will fish for men." May we go deeper in obedience to his word and hold firmly to his promise, "You will fish for people."