

JESUS CALLS SIMON

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 story is about a fisherman, probably the most well-known fisherman of all-time, Simon better known as Peter. It’s a transformational story of a fisherman who became a fisher of men. At UBF, we have proudly taken this term “fishing” onto a whole new other level. I have always found that expression a bit odd, “Fishing for sheep.” (But it is Jesus who called Simon to be fishers of men and after resurrection, by the Lake, commanded, “Feed my lambs.”) And I always thought, for some odd reason, what about veterinarians. I will make you doctors of men?

I think the story of Simon’s calling is really important to you, the under 30 group, because you have most of your life ahead of you. Jesus called Simon from a fisherman into a fisher of men... from an ordinary life into an extraordinary life; from a life merely lived for this perishing world to that which is lived for the eternal, imperishable, Kingdom of God.

I hope that this passage will offer a time of reflection for you as you ponder where you stand in relationship to Jesus. The one-two punch of this message is: Simon who discovered Jesus and himself through a miracle; and, Jesus’ calling to Simon. Jesus, the almighty God and our Savior, has a great plan in store for you. But to uncover that great plan, you must hear and accept His calling. *‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’*

Let’s pray.

Part I: Jesus and the crowd

Look at verses 1-3. *One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,[a] the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 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’ ministry consisted primarily of preaching of God’s word. Jesus made it clear about his purpose of coming to earth “... to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God” (4:43).

Led by the Spirit, Jesus’ words displayed the wisdom of the Almighty God. Jesus loved and cared for these people. Jesus generously preached the words of God to them. He opened the Scriptures to the crowd. The words pierced the hearts of many (2 Timothy 3:16-17); gave hope to the hopeless, making the poor rich and the weak strong. His teachings also quenched the spiritual thirst in people’s hearts. Everyone praised his teachings (4:15); and they were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority (4:32).

Crowds flocked to hear His words and to see His miraculous healings. Jesus once likened the situation to a field ripe for harvest but lacking workers. I pray that God may open your eyes to see that out there in the world, there are many people who are utterly lost, whose souls are weary and burdened; seeking something to do and someone to follow. I pray that God may use you as His instrument to help one lost person put their faith in Jesus and receive salvation.

Part II: Jesus and Simon

First, Jesus' command. 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."**

After Jesus was done speaking to the crowd, Jesus turned to Simon. The Christian faith is a deeply personal one. God desires to build a covenantal, personal relationship with you rather than a conditional, transactional relationship. Jesus was focused on calling and raising disciples through whom the church would grow after Him. Jesus focused on calling and raising one person, Simon, in today's passage.

The Gospel of Luke reveals that Jesus had cultivated a relationship with Simon over time before this well-known command. In Luke 4:38-39, we learn that Jesus had been to Simon's home before and that He had healed Simon's mother-in-law from a high fever. Also, as recorded in verses 2-3, Jesus taught the crowd from Simon's boat. Borrowing Simon's boat was also a way that Jesus related to and involved Simon. Jesus desires to have a personal relationship with you. And, Jesus wants to involve you for His Kingdom work.

By now we know that Jesus loved Simon. Jesus had healed his mother-in-law and had a close enough relationship to borrow a boat for preaching. It is likely that Simon heard and was amazed at Jesus' preaching while cleaning the nets, too. Like others, he was struck by Jesus' insight and authority. But Then came Jesus' direct, personal command to him, **"Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch"** I think one of Jesus' greatest gifts is revealing Himself to us and that's precisely what Jesus' command was going to do.

Second, Simon's struggle and obedience. Look at 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."**

Simon answered, **"Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything."** I don't know how many of you relate to Simon's words. Have you worked hard all night with nothing to show for it? Sometimes we work hard but produce nothing. Fruitless. Life seems like that sometimes, fruitless. Compared to their efforts, no fruit. When we face failures and setbacks, we can easily become defensive, bitter and abandon God. But sometimes, our low points can be the best times to meet Jesus, too.

Also, let me list a few reasons why Jesus' commands were out of place. First, Simon was an experienced, professional fisherman who knew the Lake like the back of his hands; Jesus, on the other hand, was a carpenter's son, meaning that he was not qualified to suggest fishing practices to Simon. Second, having fished all night, Simon and the crew was physically exhausted. Third, they were in the process of washing the nets. Fourth, fishing in those days was done mostly in the shallow waters where fish preyed on insects and hence deep waters was not quite the way to do it.

But, look at verse 5b. **"But because you say so, I will let down the nets."**

When Jesus' command is out of our comfort zone or seemingly nonsensical, we have a choice to make: either we obey or not. We can make excuses that we are too busy, tired or that we will obey later. We can also insist that our own ways are better. But look at what Simon said, "...

because you say so.” We should learn to have a humble, open attitude towards Jesus’ words. We ought to put Jesus’ words above our thinking and our preferences.

Third, the Miracle and Jesus, the almighty God. Look at verses 6-7. 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 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.

It is written that they caught a large number of fish and that the nets were breaking and boats sinking. Because Simon was an experienced fisherman and was familiar with the Lake, he knew that this event was out of the ordinary – that this was a doing of the supernatural.

While others were mesmerized with the catch, Simon was mesmerized with Jesus. For him, it was not about the miracle of the big catch but the miracle inside his heart.

Simon discovered that Jesus is the almighty God. In front of Simon was the almighty God who had sent swarm of gnats, frogs and locusts to judge Pharaoh; the almighty God who used the east wind to bring quails as food to the wandering Israelites.

Miracles serve a purpose in Jesus’ ministry. They are supposed to be signs, sign posts to Jesus, the almighty creator God and the Savior of the world. But, unfortunately, people often get stuck with fish or the bread. The crowd who lacks personal relationship with God focuses on the gift over the gift giver. As disciples of Jesus and as those who have the personal relationship with God, we ought to focus on the gift giver rather than the gift.

Fourth, Simon’s discovery of his status as 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!”

He realized that he was a sinner who lived in the absence of God, His very Creator and Heavenly Father. Simon realized that he neither deserved to be in the Lord’s presence nor to receive this kind of favor. Shame and fear instantly gripped him. Recognizing that we are sinners is the beginning of our spiritual walk. If we do not recognize ourselves as absolute sinners before the Lord, we will never have the full appreciation of a Savior.

I, too, discovered myself as a sinner in high school in 2006 in a summer retreat. I heard Jesus’ cry on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) I learned the grave consequences of sin and how I had hurt God by sinning. My sin was so great that it demanded the blood of God’s own son. I refer to my sins as the 4 L’s. Lust, laziness, lack of faith and loser mentality. I had for many years suffered from pornography. I lacked self-control and was lazy, wasting time and energy on useless things. I lacked faith, living in constant storm of worries and anxieties about life. I lived with a loser-mentality that I am stupid and that I cannot do anything. These vices became a burden of guilt and I became ashamed of my being. I grew up being ashamed of my poverty stricken life in Russia. I lived with shame about my abilities, especially on academic achievement related matters.

Fifth, Jesus’ calling and Simon’s response.

10b Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Jesus embraced Simon with the words, “Don’t be afraid.” Moving a step further, Jesus called Simon personally to a life of a discipleship as a fisher of men. That’s how it works. Jesus called Simon in this way. Jesus transformed their lives from mere fishermen to fishers of men. So, they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. Jesus calls you to His purpose, too. God has a purpose for you. “The greatest purpose we can have in life is to follow Jesus in catching men for Him.”

Jesus touched my heart, too. Jesus’ love slowly but surely healed me. There was no doubt, I was an unworthy sinner before the holy God. There was no doubt that I did not have much to offer to Him. But God loved me so much. God sent Jesus who showed me what love is by laying down His life for me. This kind of radical, hurricane-like love shook my world. This kind of authentic love I could not find anywhere else. When God invited me to His calling, I knew this is what my life was about and that this is the best way to live my life before my King and my Savior Jesus. I was reminded of a parable in Matthew 13:44 “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.” Following Jesus is not about abandoning boats, and everything. We often get scared by Simon’s radical abandonment of his past but you know when we truly meet Jesus and experience His touch on us, everything else just dims in comparison.

Let me conclude with one brief story of Steve Jobs. When trying to hire an executive from Coca Cola over to Apple, he asked, “Do you want to live the rest of your life selling sugar water or do you want to change the world?” When Jesus calls us to His purpose, it is such a no brainer to take up this life of calling. It is the wisest investments of our lives and it is the only true way to live our lives as children of God.

Look at this picture taken circa 1975. You can spot M. Esther, Grace and Rebekah. If this conference were taking place in 1975, they would be in this group, the under 30 group. I believe they must be around 25 years old in the picture when they first came to the United States as missionaries. Yes, I have tremendous respect and love for their love for Christ. But I want to assure you that they were not unlike us when they heard and accepted Jesus’ words, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” While it is true that they are giants of faith, there is nothing to say that we cannot do the same and even greater things than they because we believe in the same Lord Jesus Christ.



Let me pray.