

# **LUKE**

“The Moment Everything Changed”

*Luke 5:1-11*

Sunday, April 2, 2017

By David A. Ritchie

*“On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.’ And Simon answered, ‘Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.’ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.’ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him” (Luke 5:1–11, ESV).*

*Almighty God, you are the infinite Lord of heaven. The train of your robe fills the court of your temple, and for all eternity the angels proclaim that you are holy. Before you, who are we that you are mindful of us? It is by grace alone that you know, love us, and call us by name, not only into salvation, but into your mission. By the work of your Spirit, give us eyes to see your Son Jesus in such a way that we would be forever changed. In Jesus’s name we pray, Amen.*

## **I. Introduction**

Imagine what Simon Peter’s life was like life before Jesus.

For all intents and purposes, he was a normal Jewish young man. He grew up on the shores of the Sea of Galilee (or what this passage calls “the lake of Gennesaret.” He probably learned how to fish from his dad, who almost certainly was a fisherman before him. He likely grew up going to synagogue, memorizing the Psalms, learning the Law of the Lord, and hearing the stories of the Old Testament. But his expectation for life was to become the owner of his own fishing business.

One day he would have gotten married. And on another day his mother in-law came to live with him and his wife. But after that, it was pretty much a normal life. On Monday he would fish, on Tuesday he would fish, on Wednesday he would fish, over and over again this cycle would go.

But then a new rabbi named Jesus comes to town, and Simon Peter goes to hear him preaching in the synagogue. Along with the rest of his synagogue, Peter is astonished at this man’s teaching, because he possesses authority and power. And then, out of nowhere, a demon possessed man begins shouting out about this new teacher in the middle of the synagogue service. But Jesus simply commands the demon to be silent and come out of man. He doesn’t have to use a magic spell or summon his energy. He simply speaks and the demon must obey.

Suffice it to say, everybody, including Simon Peter is amazed by Jesus. But Peter is a little more bold than that average person, so he walks right up to Jesus after service and invites Jesus to come over to his house for lunch. Jesus accepts the invitation. But by the way, remember Simon Peter's mother-in-law? She is incredibly sick at Peter's home. So what does Jesus do? He heals her. Word spreads until, the whole city is lined-up outside Peter's front door to be healed by Jesus.

This story is a retelling of the last part of Luke chapter four, which we studied last week. And I review all of this to simply remind you: to experience what Simon Peter already has experienced would have been amazing. It would have given him a good set of stories for the rest of his life. Peter had already met Jesus. He had even experienced some level of his power.<sup>1</sup> But Christ is deeper still. And in today's passage, Christ will call Peter to so much more.

Today it is possible and likely that you have in some sense already met Jesus. You may have even already experienced his power. But like Peter, Christ is calling you to more than you could have ever imagined.

One of the foundational pillars that forms the vision and values of Redeemer Christian Church is that we believe: ***If you are a follower of Jesus, you are by nature called to participate in the mission of God.***

Perhaps like Simon Peter in Luke 5, you are at a turning point, and you hear the call of Christ to go out in to the deeper waters. How will you respond? Would you be content with a booming fishing business? Will you be content with the familiar?

Today I want to explore "The Moment Everything Changed" for Peter, and observe how what changed Peter's life can change our lives too. I'll argue that there are three realities at work in this text that create life-change: ***1.) The Reality of Jesus, 2.) The Reality of Ourselves, and 3.) The Reality of Our Call.***

## II. Text

### **1.) The Reality of Jesus.**

Jesus, again, is in the seaside town of Capernaum. But Jesus's fame has grown as a teacher and a worker of miracles, so that the little local synagogue is no longer capable of holding the crowds who want to hear him teacher. More than that, it now appears that Jesus is preaching and teaching to crowds on regular workdays, not just Sabbath days.

At this particular moment, Jesus is preaching on a beach. (For those of you who go to WT, you could say this is the original *Beach Reach*). However, the crowds are so large, Jesus is being pushed up against the sea.

So he improvises. There are some fishermen who are just coming into shore from a long night of trying to catch some fish, but to no avail. And what do you know? Jesus's friend Simon Peter happens to be one of those fishermen. So Jesus asks his new friend if he can set out from shore just a little bit, so that he can use his boat as a type of pulpit as he preaches to the crowds on the shore.

---

<sup>1</sup> While all the gospel accounts describe Peter's call in some sense, Luke alone gives us a sense of what led up to Peter leaving everything and following Jesus. "Luke's story shows that the call took place only after the fishermen had made the acquaintance of Jesus and experienced a revelation of his heavenly power." I. Howard Marshall, [\*The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text\*](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 199.

But it is after the sermon when things begin to get interesting.

He tells Peter to go further; to go out into the deeper waters and to let down his nets. Peter's response expresses confusion, but, nevertheless, obedience: *"Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."*

Here we see a slight repetition of last week's theme of *the authority of Jesus's word*.<sup>2</sup> Jesus had apparently made an impression in such a way that even these hard-working, no-nonsense, rough-neck fisherman obeys his command and does "something that at face value appears foolish."<sup>3</sup>

To recast newly cleaned nets after a hard night's work was a little irritating, a little irrational, and a little inconvenient. *Often times walking in obedience to God on a daily basis is a little irritating, a little irrational, and a little inconvenient.*

But what this moment shows us is that *responding in faithful obedience to God's word when it doesn't make sense and when we don't feel like it is often a gateway to a deeper knowledge of God.*

In Simon Peter's case, he catches more fish than he could ever handle. It is the biggest payload he has ever known in his life. He has to call another boat to help him haul the catch in, and still, two boats are not able to hold this catch.

And for whatever reason, in this moment in the deeper waters, Simon Peter is able to glimpse something of a deeper reality about Jesus. As one preacher noted: *"...Simon's response to the power and knowledge of Jesus is not a fisherman's response; that is, he did not say, Why did I not know where the fish were? Rather, his response is that of a human being in the presence of one he now calls Lord."*<sup>4</sup>

Remember, Peter had already seen miracles. But for whatever mysterious reason this moment has provoked a sudden personal awareness of the reality of Jesus.

And this is a point I want especially you kids in the room to understand: **Jesus is a man. But he is also so much more. He is more than a Rabbi, more than a moral teacher, more than a prophet. He is God and Lord.** In this moment Peter is able to glimpse the majestic divinity of Jesus Christ. In Revelation, the last book of the Bible, the Apostle John is able to give us a brief unveiled look at this true reality of Jesus: *"Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades'"* (Revelation 1:12–18, ESV).

---

<sup>2</sup> "The centrality and efficacy of Jesus' word is again much in evidence: the people come to hear the word of God (v. 1), and Simon responds to Jesus, 'At your word I will let down the nets' (v. 5)." Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 70.

<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 169.

<sup>4</sup> Craddock, 70.

This is who Jesus really is. And if this is true, we cannot relegate Jesus to the status of a once a week hobby. He cannot be treated as an optional category of our lives. Nominal adherence and half-hearted devotion will not do.

As the great C.S. Lewis says: *"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."*<sup>5</sup>

## 2.) The Reality of Ourselves.

In this moment, as suddenly as he is confronted with the reality of Jesus, he is also confronted with the reality of himself: *"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."*

Now, what should we make of this? Is Peter being compelled to groveling and self-hatred? Is he confessing some horrendous sin in his life? Probably not, as Dr. Robert Stein suggests: "Peter's sense of his own sinfulness was not due to disobedience in Luke 5:5a but to a general unworthiness (cf. 7:6; Job 42:5–6) as he confronted the Lord's might and majesty."<sup>6</sup>

Peter's response is the natural response to God's overwhelming holiness. And it mirrors the way people often responded to the glory of God in the Old Testament. In fact, many scholars have observed that this passage about the calling of Simon Peter is very similar to the calling of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah:<sup>7</sup> *"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!' And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!' Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for'" (Isaiah 6:1–7, ESV).*

Notice the parallels: a sudden revealing of God's power, majesty, and holiness; a sudden awareness of a man's unworthiness and sin; and finally, life-changing call into the service of God. **It is in the place of understanding our true weakness, that we are able to discover the power our true identity and calling in Christ.**

And here is the reality about Peter and about you: *we are weak, we are fallible, we are profoundly ordinary, and we are exactly the type of people God uses.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 40-41.

<sup>6</sup> Stein, 169.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>8</sup> Ian McConnell. "Five Essential Elements of a Church on Mission." *High Plains Pastors Conference*. (Dalhart, Texas: March 28, 2017).

Jesus tells Peter: “Do not be afraid.” By grace alone, Peter’s unworthiness is cleansed by Christ. Just as the Prophet Isaiah’s unworthiness was cleansed by a fiery coal from the altar of heaven, so too we are made clean by a sacrifice of a lamb who was slain.

Jesus is reminding Peter, and he is reminding us, though our sin is great – Jesus is greater. The reality of our selves is this: If you are a Christian, God no longer sees you in your sin, he sees you in his Son.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.) The Reality of Our Call.

Jesus response to Simon Peter is not only, “Do not be afraid,” but rather, **“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”** In effect he is saying, *“You and I will be working together from now on.”*<sup>10</sup> It seems this vast multitude of fish is a prophetic foretaste of the thousands and thousands of people who come to know Jesus through ministry of Peter and the other disciples.<sup>11</sup>

Notice how Simon Peter’s call to discipleship is also a call to join Jesus in his mission. I will say again what I said earlier: ***If you are a follower of Jesus, you are by nature called to participate in the mission of God.*** Now you may not be called to lay down your day-job like Peter, James, and John. But you are called. In fact, I would encourage you to look at where you have been uniquely positioned by the sovereignty of God, and how you might leverage that place for the glory of God. We have people in this church been sovereignly sent into business offices, classrooms, hospitals, and homes.

And if you do not know where to start, start by thinking of someone you know that does not know Jesus or is not connected to a local church and invite them to worship with us on Easter Sunday.

However, while we might not have to leave our job to participate in the mission of God, we will have to leave something behind.<sup>12</sup> And I would encourage you to ask the question: ***what do you need to leave behind so that you can follow Jesus?***

It is risky business following Jesus. But not following Jesus is riskier. What might we lose if we do not respond the call? I’ll tell you what Peter would have lost. *Peter is destined to walk on water (Mt. 14). He is destined to watch Jesus live, die, and rise again. He is destined to preach a sermon on the day of Pentecost and watch 3000 people become converted as a result (Acts 2). He is destined walk through the streets and your shadow heals people (Acts 5). And he is destined to die in the capital of the world empire, having been a part of a movement that will split history.*

*Jesus does ask for everything. But Jesus also has given us everything. And he is worth everything. Jesus has lived for us. He has died for us. He has risen again for us. And one day he will return for us.*

As N.T. Wright once said, **“When Jesus calls, he certainly does demand everything, but only because he has already given everything himself, and has plans in store, for us and the world, that we would never have dreamed of.”**<sup>13</sup>

May we be a people who respond to the call to go into deeper waters. Amen.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> N.T. Wright. *Luke for Everyone*. (Louisville: WJK, 2001, 20040, 54.

<sup>11</sup> Stein, 169.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, 55.

## **Community Group Discussion Questions**

- 1. In Luke's gospel, Simon Peter first meets Jesus in chapter four. However, in this passage (Lk. 5:1-11), he encounters Jesus in such a way that causes him to lay down everything and follow him. What leads Peter to this transformative moment? What can we learn from this passage that would help us to grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus?*
- 2. Many scholars have noted how this story of Peter's calling is similar to the calling of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6:1-7. How are these stories similar, and what can we learn by comparing them?*
- 3. Luke 5:1-11 is a story about the call of God into discipleship and mission, and in gospels, discipleship and mission always go together. How should we see the call to follow Christ as a call to participate in his mission? What are ways that God has called you to participate in this mission right now?*
- 4. What do you need to consider leaving behind so that you can follow Jesus (cf. Lk. 5:11)?*