
Knowing Jesus

The Call of Christ

Luke 5:1-11

1/27/2019

Main Idea: God can do the impossible with the willing.

Lesson Objective: Obey the call of Jesus Christ

Introduction

As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Imagine, if you will, that you work for a company whose president found it necessary to travel out of the country and spend an extended period of time abroad. So he says to you and the other trusted employees, "Look, I'm going to leave. And while I'm gone, I want you to pay close attention to the business. You manage things while I'm away. I will write you regularly. When I do, I will instruct you in what you should do from now until I return from this trip."

Everyone agrees. He leaves and stays gone for a couple of years. During that time he writes often, communicating his desires and concerns. Finally he returns. He walks up to the front door of the company and immediately discovers everything is in a mess--weeds flourishing in the flower beds, windows broken across the front of the building, the gal at the front desk dozing, loud music roaring from several offices, two or three people engaged in horseplay in the back room. Instead of making a profit, the business has suffered a great loss. Without hesitation he calls everyone together and with a frown asks, "What happened? Didn't you get my letters?" You say, "Oh, yeah, sure. We got all your letters. We've even bound them in a book. And some of us have memorized them. In fact, we have 'letter study' every Sunday. You know, those were really great letters."¹

I think the president would then ask, "But what did you do about my instructions?" And, no doubt the employees would respond, "Do? Well, nothing. But we read every one!"

¹Charles Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity*, p. 242

As believers, we are called to live our lives in a way that directly and indirectly points others to Jesus. By investing in the lives of others, inviting them into His body of believers on earth, we must be willing to enter the zone of the unknown (that is, the uncertainty of how they may respond) and actively listen for the Spirit's prompting as we seek to proclaim the gospel's good news of salvation and life.

Available

Luke 5:1-4

¹On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ 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. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#).

Our passage today is very similar to other accounts found in Matt. 4:19-22 and Mark 1:16-20. One thing that can be noticed is that Luke's account contains a little more detail about the unique encounter with Jesus and Simon Peter. One interesting note is the phrase, "**On one occasion.**" The word choice that Luke used does not indicate a specific chronological sequence. This should help us understand that the timing of the event was not the teaching point Luke was intending, but more of filling the theological backdrop of the ministry of Jesus by establishing His Sovereign Lordship over all things, which will be revealed throughout the book.

Luke painted the picture of a huge crowd pressing against Him in order to hear the "**word of God.**" During this time in Galilee there was a movement to bring righteousness back to the Northern part of Israel by bringing a strict adherence to the Torah. Several works among traveling rabbis called for the people to follow the stringent teachings of the Pharisees (the word Pharisee means "set apart," because they demanded people to be set apart from their culture). Thus, people had heard many "sermons" that covered the subjects of righteousness by works, but here in this moment, they are able to hear the

“Good News” from Jesus. Jesus as True Prophet was able to proclaim God’s word to the people without giving other people’s opinions and commentaries. The people who crowded the shore that day were desiring to hear fresh words from God concerning their failing attempts to keep the law.

Another phrase that paints a beautiful picture for us to imagine are the words “**Lake of Gennesaret.**” The term “Gennesaret” refers to a fertile, heavily populated area at the northwestern corner of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum lies at the lake’s northern tip. The district’s name was at times extended to the lake so that it could be called the Lake of Gennesaret.² This lake was a very important source of fish that fueled the local economy, bringing many fishermen to the area and local businesses seeking to buy and sell in the fish market. The irony of the passage strikes us, because in this fertile spot the expert fishers could not catch anything! These men, obviously would have been tired and frustrated wondering what in the world they had done wrong that produced little results.

There are several different kinds of nets that were used in the biblical times; however, due to the next verse explaining that they had fished all night, we know what kind of net the men were washing. It is called a trammel net, which contained different kinds of gauges within it. At night the fish would swim through a wide gauge (opening) in the first net. Their noses would hit the inner narrow net, and because they couldn’t see the net in the dark night waters, the fish would instinctively push themselves through the wide gauge and be trapped inside a pocket made by the inner net. Let’s try to imagine these guys taking

² Robert H. Stein, [Luke](#), vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 168.

those nets and trying to clean them out, wash them, and prepare for the next night as they overheard the message of Jesus.

It was at this point that Jesus got into Simon's boat and asked him to push out a little from the land. This would have been a huge inconvenience for Simon, because the time that he would have been spent sitting in the boat listening to Jesus could have been used preparing the nets for the next night of fishing. Without fish the men would not have been paid. Simon chose the better option. He made himself available to the Master and did as He commanded. He pushed out a little and listened as Jesus taught. We should consider the point and check ourselves. Are we in a position where we have stopped what we were doing in order to hear from God? So many times we would rather trust in our own strengths and abilities rather than sit patiently at the Master's feet. We would rather search every avenue of gain rather than give a moment to God to invest His word into our hearts.

Next, Jesus called them to put out into the deep and let down their nets for a catch. (He actually called Simon's name but he used plural possessive pronouns which indicates that Simon was the leader of this fishing operation). This was a common practice among Jesus in His ministry. We see Him giving someone a simple invitation to join Him and then giving another command later that would call for a stronger commitment. Anyone could have listened and obeyed the first request of Jesus, but the next one would require more belief in Jesus. Jesus was the Master at making disciples. He knew when to extend an invitation and when to give a challenge to His followers. This caused them to keep moving and not remain stagnant in their faith. It has been said that this is the reason why so many of our churches are plateaued and declining because many have come inside the church in response to the invitation but have never

committed themselves to Christ by receiving His call to minister to others. For this reason many of our churches are functioning on 15% of the participants that are active in ministry while 85% sit on the sidelines.

We must learn how to balance our ministries with the same style of leadership as Jesus. We must keep a balance of invitation and challenge in the lives of the people attending our church. This will be difficult, but extremely rewarding. This does not mean that we must brow beat everyone every Sunday into submission, but it does mean that we should invest our lives into one another as we seek to grow in Christlikeness. Along the way there will be times for encouraging and inviting each other to go deeper in our faith, but at other times there will be challenges to go and do what Christ has already commanded us to do.

Sometimes setbacks and disappointments will make us try to work harder in order to have better results. Why do you think Simon was willing to stop and accompany Jesus in the boat?

Are there times in our lives that we are so busy that we cannot hear God's word?

What are some things we can do to be more available to hear God's word?

Would you consider your personal relationship with Jesus more on the invitational (comfortable) or more on the Challenge (commitment) side?

Obedient

Luke 5:5-10a

⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." ⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. ⁷ 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. ⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." ⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

Simon, Andrew, James, John and Philip are from Bethsaida, which means the house of the fisherman/hunter. These men were rough sailors. Jesus was from Nazareth, a land-locked little village, and here he was giving them a command on how to fish! Nay, good fisherman would have known that the particular nets that they were using could not be used during the day. It would not work! The fish would see the nets and swim away, but there was something different about Jesus. Simon called Him Master. This term helps us identify where Simon was in his belief. Luke used two words that most people used with Jesus. The most common was Teacher. This was used by the people outside of His followers, strangers to Him. The other term was Master. This was used exclusively by His followers and reveals their beliefs concerning His authority and abilities.

Imagine that you are in the heat of the day. You've fished all night and have caught nothing. A unique preacher of God's word comes to your shore and teaches so much that He asks you to help Him out by lending Him your boat. You oblige, but now He asks you to do something which on the surface seems

foolish. Picture Simon looking up at Jesus and saying, “Look, we fished all night and didn’t catch a thing!” “But because you said so I will do it.” We will never know what convinced Simon Peter to obey the Lord’s command. Perhaps it was the recognition that John the Baptist had given to Jesus as being the “Lamb of God” (John 1:35). Maybe it was the news of the all of the miracles that Jesus had done in the surrounding region. Nonetheless, Simon knew that there was something different about Jesus; so he obeyed.

Imagine the fishermen’s surprise when they caught such a great number of fish that their nets were inadequate for the weight and began to tear. Until now, they may have cooperated more out of indulgence than belief that they would catch many fish by following Jesus’ instructions.

Even when the fishermen in the second boat joined the effort, so many fish were in both boats that they began to sink. The fish harvest was so great that it not only was too much for the nets, but it also overwhelmed the capacity of the small fishing boats common to the lake. The fishermen immediately recognized the miraculous nature of this experience. Simon Peter fell at Jesus’ knees, a sign of submission and pleading. He addressed Jesus as “Lord.” He had been brought *personally* into the sphere of Jesus’ mighty kingdom power. It is quite possible that this was not his first exposure to Christ’s kingdom authority, but this time Jesus ministered in his personal universe—his sea, his boat, his nets—and so the significance came to him as never before. He saw that Jesus belonged to a sphere to which he did not belong. “Here was the Lord of fish and fishermen, the Lord of nature, the Lord of men and of their daily work.”³

³ David Gooding, *According to Luke: A New Exposition of the Third Gospel* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1987), p. 103.

If at this point Simon Peter did not fully understand that Jesus was the Christ, he did at least understand that the divine presence was in Christ—and thus he called him “Lord.” Peter knew he was in some way in the presence of God. Peter was also overcome with an awareness of his own sinfulness. In moral agony he fell at Jesus’ knees crying, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” Faced with Christ’s authority and power, his soul flooded with a sense of his own evil and hollowness, and with a trembling realization of the personal consequences of his sin. This is the proper response to God.⁴

Given the lack of success the fishermen had faced so far, how easy might it have been to grow hopeless?

Why do you think they were willing to take Jesus at His word and obey His command?

What was the difference or differences between how Jesus saw the situation and how the fishermen viewed it?

What situation in your life might you be seeing as more hopeless that Jesus sees it?

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [*Luke: That You May Know the Truth*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 161–162.

Devoted

Luke 5:10b-11

And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)

Although Jesus’ invitation was addressed to Simon, it obviously was also meant for James and John. Luke noted the inclusiveness of the response in the plural pronoun, “they.” Partners in commercial fishing, these three, along with Andrew, were to become partners in following Jesus. They left home, family, occupation, and security in order to follow Jesus. And they did so immediately. The picture one gets is that they simply pulled the boats onto the shore and walked off.

There can be little doubt that Luke intended his reader to see these men as models, who do precisely what Jesus will later call all disciples to do. Peter will later recall this scene after Jesus tells the rich young man to sell all and follow him. “Peter said to him, ‘We have left all we had to follow you.’ ‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus said to them, ‘no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life’ ” (Luke 18:29–30).⁵

A life radically devoted to Jesus doesn’t go after small stuff, such as the house we live in or the car we drive. It goes after people. The most important thing we can do with our lives, from sunup to sundown, is to impact people for God’s kingdom. As we do so, we have the ability to recalibrate our church,

⁵ Mark C. Black, [Luke](#), College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 1995), Lk 5:11.

helping us focus on the mission. We can set a trajectory for our church's future that is about the Father's business, which is always centered on reaching people.

In each of the stories from the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, Luke emphasized Jesus' authority and the powerful effect of His words. The prophecy from Isaiah 61:1-2 (quoted in Luke 4:18-19) was fulfilled in Jesus, and His actions and speech authenticated that He is the Messiah, and that He calls each of us to lay down our lives and follow Him as true fishers of men.

What do you think made the men leave behind everything they knew to follow Jesus?

Is there anything you would regret leaving behind should following Jesus require it? Why or why not?

What have you already left behind?

What does it take to become a contagious Christian? What might happen if you stepped out of your comfort zone in order to change someone's life on earth and ultimate destination?

What worldly anxieties, desires or indulgences are you tempted to spend your time, effort and life on? How can you take one step this week to surrender those things in order to focus on others?

How can we as a group carry out the mission of God in our families, schools, communities and workplace this week?

Who do you have a burden for this week? What can you do to live and speak the gospel of truth to them in order to point them to Jesus?