**Go Fishing!**

**Luke 5:1-11**

5th Sunday after Trinity

07.04.2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever gone fishing? If you have, you probably have had a day where you have fished every part of the lake and tried every possible technique and bait and still caught no fish – right?

Ever have a day like that and come in and somebody sitting around – who has obviously not been fishing – says to you, “No fish eh, you should go back out and try that spot over by the fallen tree.”

There is no way that you are going back out to try another spot. Yet, in our text for today, this is the setting. Jesus tells Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

Simon, having now been sitting in the boat and listening to Jesus speak says, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! BUT at your word I will let down the nets.”

You can hear it in his response, Simon is a little skeptical. He is thinking that there is no way they are going to catch any fish, BUT… he will do so… to humor this teacher – this One whose words were so life-giving and uplifting.

What happens? So many fish were caught they signaled the other boat to come out and they filled both boats to the point they were sinking. A miracle! Simon recognizes Jesus as Lord.

Jesus tells Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” And what did Simon and the others do? They pulled their boats on shore, left everything and followed Him.

Our Old Testament lesson has Elijah being called forth to go and proclaim God's Word. Which, by the way, he also does! Our Epistle lesson tells us to *always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.* And as we just heard in our Gospel lesson, Simon, James, and John abandon their fishing stuff and follow Jesus to fish for men.

***Do you understand this? They were not fishing for pleasure, or for a perch dinner for two. Fishing is their livelihood, and this is a phenomenal catch – a week’s worth of wages.***

If you are a Christian and believe that salvation is found in no One else that Jesus, that He is your Lord, what should you do? You have knowledge of the Truth that is Good News for all mankind. Now what?

If you found a great place to go fishing, you would not be quiet about it and just go back by yourself. OK, maybe you would – in your selfishness. But more than likely, at the very least, you would talk about it – brag about it. Furthermore, you would probably take a friend back there with you – maybe even more than one friend.

When you find a great restaurant, you tell all your friends and encourage them to go there as well. What a wonderful place.

So why do you keep your mouths shut about your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Why isn't this church full of people? Because, for some reason, you have failed to tell others and invite them. Are you ashamed of Zion/St. Peter/St. John and the Gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed and delivered here? I am proud to invite people to Zion/St. Peter/St. John to hear the Word of Christ and receive His Body pierced for them – His Blood shed for them. I declare this is a wonderful congregation, the family of Christ in this place adopts and loves newcomers as their own children. Or is there another problem which keeps you silent?

Jeremiah gave the excuse that he was too young to be a prophet of God. A few weeks ago, Isaiah, a man of unclean lips was afraid to speak. In our Gospel lesson, Simon Peter falls on his knees begging Jesus to leave. Why? Because he is a sinful man.

What is your excuse for keeping your mouth shut about God being your Lord and Savior? Are you too young? Our kids have invited friends to Sunday School and Catechetical Retreat. They are younger than those of you that are not proclaiming the good news. So, that is not a good excuse.

Maybe you are too old? Gee, Noah should have used that excuse. He was over 500 years old when God came to him and told him to build the ark. And what did Noah do, he obeyed the Lord and did what was asked of him.

Maybe your excuse is, “I can't do it anymore, I've done my time for the church, let some others step up.” Imagine Jesus on the cross using that excuse. “OK Father, I have spent enough time up here, I know that I was supposed to finish the plan, but I've done enough, let someone else finish it.”

Maybe your excuse echoes Moses’ excuse, “I do not know what to say?” God told him that He would supply the words – just as He promises the Spirit will give you the words to say.

The excuse that often gets in my way is, “I don't want to talk to proclaim the Gospel of Christ because nobody wants to listen – everybody tunes me out. Another one that gets in the way of my evangelizing others is their stubbornness to hear the Word, they’d rather follow the hollow Gospel of this decadent world. Fine, I am tired of fighting, proclaiming God’s truth, I’m with Elijah, if they don’t want to hear the truth, if they would rather I just shut up, fine. If they don't want to listen to God’s truth, why should I bother – let them endure the consequences of their sinfulness.

But I am forgetting the power of our God to work on and change the hearts of mankind by the power of the Holy Spirit working through His Word. Isaiah records God’s proclamation. *“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to eater; So shall My Word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”* (Isa. 55:10-11)

When we proclaim Christ to our friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, we are God's mouthpiece proclaiming His Word. He promises to work on the hearts of men and brings them to Himself through their hearing of that Word, not us. When we proclaim His Word, God will grow His Church.

However, without our speaking the Word, without our inviting them to Zion/St. Peter/St. John, they will never hear that Word so God can work on their hearts.

If you do not feel comfortable discussing in depth with people the doctrines of Christianity and what we believe, invite them anyway and tell them, “I may not good at answering your questions, but our pastor loves to sit and talk and would be happy to spend time with you – come and meet him.”

Simon Peter fell on his knees before Jesus and told Jesus to go away from him because he was sinful man. Yet Jesus took Peter along, making him one of his disciples.

Today you have come before God and confessed your sinfulness. In confessing our sinfulness, we are like Peter. Jesus told him not to be afraid. Why? Because He had come to purchase forgiveness – for Peter, for me, and for you. That forgiveness is delivered to you today.

God in His Word came to you in the absolution and forgave your sins - they are truly forgiven in heaven before God.

Just as Simon Peter was unworthy to even stand before Jesus on his own, neither are you – or me for that matter. You are not worthy to go out into the community and proclaim the good news of Christ. Yet it was not because of Peter's worth that Jesus called him as a disciple, nor was it because of Peter's will, for Peter wanted to have nothing to do with this man, the one he calls Lord.

Jesus called Simon to follow Him and be a fisher of men because of who Jesus was and what He would make of Peter – not because of Peter's worth or willingness. Even after Peter was chosen by Jesus, he denied Christ in the garden of the high priest that night Jesus was betrayed.

For which failure Peter was forgiven. In the same way, you are forgiven for your past failures in missed opportunities to proclaim Christ's love and forgiveness to others.

It is for failures, some which we will probably repeat and need to be forgiven of again, that Christ went to the cross. It was for our failures as sinners that Christ was perfect, the perfect sacrifice for sins.

God called me to the Holy Ministry. He worked in my life to lead me to be a pastor. Not because I am worthy of this office of my own, but because Christ makes me worthy through the forgiveness of my sins and His Word working continually in my life. I am not now nor will I ever be a perfect pastor – only a forgiven one.

This same God, this same Jesus Christ is at work in your life. Through His Word He forgives you of sin and gives unto you His power, the power of His Holy Spirit, you too may carry His Word to people and be a fisher of men.

God has made you worthy of the calling to speak of Him and His love for all mankind by giving you His Word. He has made you worthy by convicting your heart by the work of the Holy Spirit that His love is truly for you and others – that you are His own dear child.

Going now and speaking of your Savior is an act of faith. As we know from the Epistle of James, faith that is truly alive will produce works of faith.

Peter declared His faith in action. *And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him*. Jesus declared Himself Lord by this miracle of a big catch of fish, and then called Peter to follow Him. This Peter did.

Today a miracle has been done to and for you, your sins have been forgiven. This Jesus who called Peter, calls you through His Word. He calls you, forgives you, and sends unto you the Holy Spirit who works faith in you to live – to live by faith.

Another miracle happens today. Christ, this same Jesus who came to Peter in flesh and blood, comes to your today in that same flesh and blood – sacramentally united to the bread and wine of His Supper. He comes to you as He promised to be with you always.

Through these miracles, Christ says to us as he said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” By His grace and through His power it will be so. Thanks be to God! What a beautiful day it is to go fishing – by the grace of God. Amen.