

## Luke 5:1-11 The Message (MSG)

**5** <sup>1-3</sup> Once when he was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret, the crowd was pushing in on him to better hear the Word of God. He noticed two boats tied up. The fishermen had just left them and were out scrubbing their nets. He climbed into the boat that was Simon's and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Sitting there, using the boat for a pulpit, he taught the crowd.

**4** When he finished teaching, he said to Simon, "Push out into deep water and let your nets out for a catch."

**5-7** Simon said, "Master, we've been fishing hard all night and haven't caught even a minnow. But if you say so, I'll let out the nets." It was no sooner said than done—a huge haul of fish, straining the nets past capacity. They waved to their partners in the other boat to come help them. They filled both boats, nearly swamping them with the catch.

**8-10** Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell to his knees before Jesus. "Master, leave. I'm a sinner and can't handle this holiness. Leave me to myself." When they pulled in that catch of fish, awe overwhelmed Simon and everyone with him. It was the same with James and John, Zebedee's sons, coworkers with Simon.

**10-11** Jesus said to Simon, "There is nothing to fear. From now on you'll be fishing for men and women." They pulled their boats up on the beach, left them, nets and all, and followed him.

Jesus needed a little space from which to speak to the crowds pressing upon him, so, he commandeered Peter's boat. He sees two boats that are empty because their owners aren't in them... and because they hadn't caught any fish!... and he just gets into Peter's. I love that... because **sometimes God doesn't ask our permission to get involved in our life, to encounter us with grace, God just goes ahead and does it.** Sometimes, we are the empty boat.

He asks Peter to put out a bit into the water AND Peter just does it.

he'd been fishing all night and was now cleaning his nets, and I'm guessing he probably wanted to finish that job and get home to bed.

But he takes Jesus out anyway. We don't know why.

- Maybe it's that he knew Jesus and was used to this kind of thing.



- Or maybe he's so grateful that Jesus healed his mother-in-law that there's not much he wouldn't do for Jesus.
- Or maybe he was just that kind of a guy, the kind of guy who would push out from shore even though he was *dead* tired just because you asked.
- We don't know. He just does it. And I love that.

*Jesus preached to the crowd. He taught them, and when he was done teaching, Jesus isn't all done. In fact, that he's just getting started. **Because God's like that, always up to more than we imagine.** He takes Peter out into the deep and they fish.*

Peter again does something that doesn't make sense, he lets down his nets – the nets that he'd just finished cleaning, after he'd been fishing all night and caught nothing.

And I love that pretty much nothing changes in what they're doing this time around. No new nets or special spot on the lake.

- No new technique or gimmick.
- Nothing is different from what they've been doing all night... ***Except that***

**Jesus spoke to them and they do what he says** and the word Jesus spoke makes it different, because *God's Word always does what it says, even when those hearing that Word fall short or even have a hard time believing it.*

Imagine the expression on the fishermen's faces as they struggle to haul in this unexpected catch, call their friends to help, and barely get their nets to shore. Wonder, delight, a touch of awe perhaps. These are usually the things that accompany an encounter with the Lord.

Think about this:

However, much Peter thinks he knows Jesus, he only now realizes that he really *doesn't* know him, that he's only just beginning to realize who and what Jesus is, and that it scares him a little.

It's easy, I suppose,

- to attribute Peter's confession to a lack of self-esteem, or
- an appropriate confession of sinfulness in the presence of The Sinless One.

I think that each time we experience grace, we are simultaneously joyful and a little afraid.

- We are struck by how much more we've received than we deserve or even imagined.
- We wonder how such blessings came our way and realize we are caught up in something so much bigger than ourselves.



And Jesus says to him: “Do not be afraid.” Note that Jesus’ doesn’t say, “you are forgiven.” Which is perhaps a little odd, in that Peter just said that he’s a sinner. Jesus forgives sin, for sure, but He offers so much more. In this case, He offers comfort and encouragement.

In Luke’s story, and throughout the Bible, as the promise and command to “**be not afraid**” appears about **120 times**. (Think how many times angels say these very words in just the first two chapters of Luke’s account.) We might call this the hallmark of Luke’s witness... and maybe the hallmark of the whole gospel. Jesus comes so that we don’t have to be afraid anymore. I love that.

Jesus doesn’t stop only at comfort and encouragement, but He moves on to **give Peter something to do**, something bigger and larger than anything he’d ever imagined: catching people up in the unimaginable and life-changing grace of God. Peter has no reason to expect this call and many reasons to doubt it.

Jesus calls him anyway. ***That is how God works***. He is always choosing the unlikeliest of characters through whom to work, putting aside all their doubts and fears and excuses and professed shortcomings to do marvelous things through them.

The story’s not quite done. The fishermen give everything up – their professions, their livelihood, their family and friends, everything – in order to follow Jesus.

Imagine them, they just got up and went to follow Jesus, with little to no idea where he will lead them.

Jesus is not talking only to Peter and his friends. He is talking to us, too.

Put aside all our doubt and fears and excuses and professed shortcomings to do marvelous things through us.

- Would I/you follow Jesus?
- Do I/you follow Jesus?
- Would I/you give up everything for Jesus?

These are serious and significant questions.

We should wonder about those questions and wonder about our own adequacy to respond to the Lord’s call –

But you and I are to be reminded that in this respect, too, this story isn’t done:

- Jesus is still coming to us to say, “Do not fear.” Forgiveness is within your faith.
- Jesus is still coming to us to call us to things we can’t imagine.
- Jesus isn’t finished calling people who know their sins and doubts and fears and inadequacy first hand. And



- Jesus is still coming and speaking to us, and by his speaking accomplishes in us what he's asked. Because that's what the Word of God does.

