

“A Miracle That Misses the Point?”

Luke 5:1–11

Introduction

We live in a world that loves success stories. We’re drawn to the underdog who rises, the entrepreneur who turns a garage startup into a global company, the team that fights its way to the championship. We like results. We like winning. We like prosperity.

And let’s be honest: most of us wouldn’t mind if Jesus gave us some of that too. Imagine a TV preacher taking Luke 5 and saying: *“See? When Jesus gets in your boat, your nets are going to overflow. Your business will prosper. Your life will be blessed. Just claim your miracle.”*

That sounds attractive, doesn’t it? Who doesn’t want full nets, full wallets, and full houses?

But what if that’s exactly the wrong way to read this miracle? What if the story isn’t about getting rich, but about getting free—free from riches, free from fear, free from sin—and free to follow Jesus?

Illustration: Think of lottery winners. People dream of hitting the jackpot, imagining endless happiness. Yet study after study shows many lottery winners end up bankrupt, addicted, or estranged from family. Their nets overflowed, but it ruined them. Prosperity isn’t the blessing you might think.

The miracle isn’t about fish—it’s about freedom.

1. From Empty Nets to Overflowing Nets (vv. 1–7)

Jesus is teaching by the lake. The crowds are pressing in, hungry to hear the Word of God. Jesus borrows Peter’s boat, casting His net of truth across the people.

Then comes the command: “Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets.” Peter sighs: *“Master, we’ve worked all night and caught nothing. But at your word, I will let down the nets.”* They were done. They were

washing the nets, cleaning out the seaweed and the junk. They were mending weak or fraying spots. They were spent. The business day had wrapped. If you've ever worked at a restaurant, you know how Peter felt.

You are tired and yet you are compelled to crank everything back up and head back into the work mode. And then, amazing. Suddenly the nets are bursting, the boats are sinking. The catch is overwhelming.

Think of a struggling small business that suddenly goes viral and popular overnight. They are promoting their brand, utilizing new media, current platforms. The marketing is clever. Except in Luke 5, it wasn't clever marketing but Jesus' word that made the difference.

At this point the prosperity preacher would say, "See? Jesus wants to make your life overflow." But watch carefully—because the story doesn't end with full nets. For the preacher who wants you to leave convinced that God wants to make you wealthy, help you claim your miracle, and let you live your best life now in that boat, this is where the sermon ends. Jesus hops in your boat and everything turns around, and you get everything you've ever wanted. But the story moves into a surprising place.

2. From Overflowing Nets to Exposed Sin (v. 8)

Peter falls to his knees: *"Go away from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord."*

The real effect of the miracle wasn't profit—it was conviction. Peter suddenly realizes: if Jesus has such holy power, then Peter stands condemned.

Astronauts describe the "overview effect"—seeing Earth from space and suddenly feeling small, fragile, exposed. Or think of standing by Niagara Falls - the raw power makes you tremble. That's Peter in the boat: undone before the holy Son of God.

In his boat, Peter is the expert. He grew up fishing. His dad taught him and his dad's dad taught him before that. This is the place

Peter has spent most of his life – in this boat. He is an expert fisherman. He has logged more than ten thousand hours. His life is in that boat. And then he lets Jesus on the boat and into his life. And what happens? He is undone. Wrecked. Undone, unmade, by the Lord. He's come undone. He didn't know what he was headed for and when he found out what he was headed for, it was too late. He's come undone. The Holy Son of God has wrecked Peter.

Like Jesus did to Paul. Before that day on the road to Damascus, the bright light of Christ's truth blinded Saul and wrecked his life. Saul fell to the ground and realized he was undone.

John Newton wrote about it. He had been a notorious slave trader. And then the amazing grace of Jesus wrecked his wretched life. What once was lost had been found. What John Newton and Paul and Peter couldn't have seen before, Jesus made it clear.

While everyone else was busy being amazed at the catch, Peter was broken. He had come face to face with the reality of his spiritual situation. He was a sinner.

3. From Fear to Mission (vv. 9–10)

Peter trembles in fear. But Jesus doesn't leave him there: *"Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be catching people."*

The point of the miracle wasn't fish—it was a calling. This isn't a promise to happiness or the pathway to prosperity. This is a gospel-infused directive that will completely cover and wrap all of Peter up into a calling that he will never be able to shake. Jesus was showing them that the real harvest was human souls. And in that moment, Peter is done with the boats, the nets, the fish, and that life.

Some people walk away from six-figure jobs because they've discovered their true calling: teaching, serving, missions. It's not about profit margins but people. Jesus reorients Peter's entire life around kingdom purpose.

4. From Full Boats to Empty Hands (v. 11)

Here's the stunning finale: *"They left everything and followed Him."*

The very nets that had just been filled to overflowing—the payday of a lifetime—they walked away from it all. True, there would be more fishing in the future, but not as a vocation. They will return to the boats from time to time. But their life is set on a different path.

Some professional athletes retire early, leaving millions on the table, because they've realized there's something more important—family, health, purpose. Or think of minimalists who deliberately give away possessions not out of poverty, but out of freedom. Peter and his friends gave up the biggest haul of their lives because they had found something greater in Jesus.

Imagine that. On the most successful day in your business's history, you walk away. Peter, Andrew, James and John did that. They saw the power of the Lord up close. Peter realized his sinfulness. And Jesus's righteousness. And then Jesus called Peter to this new life, this new calling.

Application

What does this mean for us?

- **Don't misuse miracles.** Jesus never does them to make us comfortable; He does them to point us to Himself.
 - **Expect conviction.** When Jesus draws near, He exposes our sin.
 - **Move from fear to faith.** Jesus says, *"Do not be afraid."*
 - **Join His mission.** He calls us to fish for people.
 - **Be free to follow.** Sometimes the greatest miracle isn't full nets—it's the freedom to walk away from them.
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Conclusion

This miracle is not about how to get rich—it's about how to get free. Free from sin, free from fear, free from the grip of possessions, free to follow Christ wherever He leads.

Near the end of his life, Steve Jobs admitted that despite all his wealth and success, he was unfulfilled. His nets were overflowing, but they couldn't save him. Contrast that with Peter, who left full nets behind and found life in Jesus.

Picture it: a child clings to a handful of marbles, unwilling to let go—while their parent is trying to place a diamond in their hand. We cling to our “nets full of fish,” not realizing that Jesus offers us something infinitely greater: Himself.

Gospel Invitation

So, here's the question: are you still clinging to your nets? Are you holding on to success, security, or sin?

Jesus is calling you today, just as He called Peter: *“Do not be afraid. From now on, follow Me.”*

If you have never trusted Him, let today be the day. Jesus bore your sin on the cross, rose victorious from the grave, and offers forgiveness and new life.

And if you are a believer, maybe Jesus is asking you to lay something down—something you've been clinging to—so you can follow Him more fully. Don't miss the miracle by chasing fish. Follow the One who gives life.