

Jesus Calls Fishermen

Luke 5:1–11 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: The year was 1991. Baby boomers were begging to feel the internal stress of life after the economic book of the 1980's. They began to search for meaning and direction. It was then that Hollywood released the movie, "City Slickers".

The movie was about a three business men who have begun to hate their jobs and yearn for something more. They decide to sign up for a cattle drive from New Mexico to Colorado led by a tough old Cowboy named Curly, played by Jack Palance.

My favorite scene in the movie is where **Billy Crystal's** character, Mitch, is alone with Curly, played by **Jack Palance**. Curly is giving Mitch some life advice.

Curly says: Mitch, Do you know what the secret of life is?

[holds up one finger] This.

Mitch asks: Your finger?

Curly: One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and the rest don't amount to a hill of beans.

Mitch: But, what is the "one thing?"

Curly: That's what you have to find out.

One of the great challenges of life is determining what is that ONE THING that you can do better than anyone. Then leveraging that one thing for financial success.

Well if anyone knew his ONE THING it was Simon Peter of Capernaum. He was put on this planet to fish. He had grown up on the shores of Galilee, learning to cast a net from an early age. Now he had a boat of his own. He had a family to feed. He knew that as long as there were fish in the sea, he would be taken care of.

Fishing was Peter's One Thing. It was his core competency. He was an expert in the field. He understood the fish, the phases of the moon, the movement of the bait fish.

Do you know what your One Thing is? Did you know that sometimes, the most difficult area of life to submit to the Lordship of Christ is that area in which you possess a particular aptitude.

Today, God will teach us that even in the area of our greatest strength - He is Lord and far more proficient at even that area than we could possibly imagine.

CONTEXT: The passage before us today concerns the initial calling of Jesus's disciples. You see there were a variety of different invitations that Jesus gave.

- He called the multitudes to salvation
- He called the 70 to go out 2 by 2, 35 pairings.
- He called the 120 to wait in Jerusalem til they were empowered by the Holy Spirit
- He called 12 to follow Him as disciples 11 of which ultimately became the Apostles of Christ. The men on whom the Greatest mission ever given would rest.

Interestingly, he doesn't go to **temple** to search for future leaders. He doesn't go to the **synagogue** and search among the religious elite, but rather he calls from among the ordinary people of His day. Fishermen nonetheless.

Remember the last time we were together we saw Jesus heal **Peter's** mother in law, then at sunset people began to press in bringing their sick to be healed by Jesus. You will continue to see the number of Jesus's follower grow as word spreads and as he makes His way into more populated regions.

TEXT: Luke 5:1–11 (ESV)

¹ 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.

The lake, more commonly known as the **Sea of Galilee** (the Old Testament refers to it as the **Sea of Chinnereth** [Num. 34:11; Josh. 13:27], and the apostle John calls it the **Sea of Tiberias** [John 6:1; 21:1], the name by which it was known when he wrote).

The lake, here called Lake Gennesaret, is a 13 mile freshwater lake that is the dominant geographical feature of the entire region of Galilee ¹ See on the map the number of events that will happen around this body of water.



¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., Luke 1–5, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 302.

It was on the shores of this fresh water lake that Simon Peter lived and worked his trade as a commercial fisherman day after day. The fish of choice was a **Tilapia** - a fish found in abundance on the Sea of Galilee. The method of fishing was a type of cast net.

The clear waters of Galilee, the hot days of the middle east, combined with the feeding habits of the Tilapia made it typical for fisherman to do their work at night.

Each morning they could be found on the shores of Galilee sorting their fish, cleaning and mending their nets and hopefully carrying a catch to the market. On this occasion, a crowd formed near where they had driven their boats ashore. The crowd was gathered, listening in wrapped attention to the Rabbi Jesus.

Now remember, this is NOT Peter's first encounter with Jesus.

- **John 1:35–42 (ESV)** tells us that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother had already begun to follow Jesus and had brought Peter to him as well introducing Jesus as the Messiah. ⁴² He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).
- Enough of a relationship had been built with Peter that Jesus was willing to stay in Peter's home, and ultimately heal Peter's mother in law.

So, it's not shocking that when....

² and he (Jesus) 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.

At first glance it seem highly unusual that a professional fisherman would allow this street preacher to commandeer his vessel. But remember, Peter knew Jesus. He liked Jesus. He may have even been open the possibility that Jesus was the Messiah. AND, Jesus had done Peter a favor, in healing his Mother-in-law.

So, it was the least Peter could do to lay down his nets, push out the boat and shuttle Jesus just a 100 ft or so out from the bank, anchor down and let Jesus preach his sermon.

Peter was the definition of a captive audience. Sitting there feet from Jesus listening to Jesus expound the OT. What a privilege.

Peter was able to turn his simple fishing boat into a vessel fit for the Master's service. Ironically, this boat would become a **parable** for Peter's entire life. It had been built with a specific intent in mind - not preaching. It was a simple little fishing boat. But when Jesus gets on the boat - it's a mercy ship. It's a floating Billy Graham Crusade.

In much the same way, we will see that the more Jesus captain's Peter's life the more the old fisherman is transformed into an Apostle of Grace.

⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

No doubt Peter assumed Jesus would say, "let's go home". Remember, Peter had been up fishing all night. Not only that - he had been in church all morning with Jesus preaching. Now, Jesus wants to go fishing? Why?

Beyond that, Jesus is Rabbi, trained as a Carpenter. What does He know about fishing? Simon's objection makes sense...

⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!"

Peter always had to say what he was thinking. It's like when Jesus told them to feed the multitudes... there is a lad here with 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish... If he had stopped there, it would have been fine... but they continued.... but what are these among so many.

Well at least here Peter complies...

5b. **But at your word** I will let down the nets."

There is our first principle...

1. The Power of Obedience

Now this is the first occasion where Peter would learn a lesson that he would have to relearn throughout his life, namely the POWER of obeying the Word of God.

- Later they will be out on this same lake and Jesus will come to them walking on water. Peter will say, "Lord, if it is you - command me to come to you on the water". And at the WORD of Jesus, Peter walks on water.
- I am of the persuasion that when it came time to feed the 5000 and the disciples tell Jesus the people are hungry, and Jesus looks at them and says, "YOU FEED THEM" the could have multiplied the loaves and the fish themselves. Why? They had the WORD of GOD.

The old hymn writer put it this way, "*trust and obey, for there's not other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey*".

ILLUSTRATION: One of my favorite stories in the OT is in **1 Chronicles 14**.

1 Chronicles 14:13–16 (ESV)

13 And the Philistines yet again made a raid in the valley. 14 And when David again inquired of God,

So David is the new King and he is getting right what Saul got wrong... he's praying about what to do. He is getting God's direction.

13b. God said to him, "You shall not go up after them; go around and come against them opposite the balsam trees. 15 And when you hear the sound of marching in the **tops of the balsam trees**, then go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines." 16 And David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer.

Robert Morris puts it this way... Now think about this... imagine what it was really like on this day. Imagine the perspective of the younger soldiers... A messenger runs up to David and says, "The Philistines have raided again in the valley" and David says, "ok" and he goes into the tent. The younger soldier says, "what David doing?" the older soldier says, "he's praying".... The younger soldier says, "It's a little late to pray... they are coming". The older soldier says, "Just listen, this is the way it works, just relax, when he comes out he will have a plan from God". They say, "Oh ok". The David comes out of the tent and this is what he says, "Guys, we're not going to do it the same way we did it earlier... the way that just gave us victory... we're not doing it that way... we are actually going to go up the other way... we are going to come up by those balsam trees... the older soldiers are like, "yeah, yeah"... the younger soldiers are still kinda listening for this... When we get to those trees... we are going to halt our position... we aren't going to attack yet... and when we hear people walking in the tops of the trees... then we're going to attack.

The older soldiers were like... good plan David... that's a good plan... because they've been with him for a while.

That reminds me of family fued... no matter what the guy said, the family would say good answer. It would be like they'd say, "name a cat" and the guy would say, "A Doberman" the family would clap and say, "good answer!" Never once did a family member say, "you are an idiot"!

What are the younger soldiers thinking? I can imagine a younger soldier asking an older soldier... "uh, excuse me... did he say.. we are going to hear people walking in the TOPS of the trees?????" yeah that's what he said.... how many times has David been hit in the head in battle.

David might have said to one of the younger soldiers, "Do you have a problem with anything I just said son?" The boy answers... no sir.... David says, look son, I know it sounds crazy.... but listen... it's not by might, it's not by power, but it's by His Spirit".

Peter learned the Power of Obedience...

2. The Principle of Harvest

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.**

Get that - both boats are almost sinking under the weight of fish.

Now, I want you to see this. You may have heard it said, “**Jesus is no man’s debtor**”. It is so true. Peter loaned Jesus his boat for a couple of hours. He probably felt like he owed it to Jesus for healing his mother in law.

But Jesus is no man’s debtor. Peter was faithful with what he had... he put it under the Master’s charge. And he was ridiculously blessed in return.

**Later in Luke Jesus will teach this principle in a very straightforward way...
Luke 6:38 (ESV)**

³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

Now is that true or not? I never understand for the life of me why a follower of Jesus Christ would be stingy.

Proverbs 3:9–10 (ESV)

⁹ Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

Have you ever considered the fact that Jesus knows more about your area of expertise than you do?

- Jesus knows how to teach 10th graders History.
- Jesus knows how to sell real estate.
- Jesus knows social media marketing.
- Jesus knows football.

Far better than you or anyone else ever will - you can trust Him with every area of your life. You can seek His direction about every area of your life. You can be generous with every area of your life knowing He is ABLE to prosper you.

The Power of Obedience...
The Principle of Harvest...

3. The Presence of God

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,

You see, Peter knew that what just happened wasn't the result of a lucky guess. It couldn't be explained away. The only way what happened could have happened was that if **Jesus was the sort of being who could command tilapia to jump into a net.**

What would that mean - this man who healed the sick, can also command the fish of the sea?

God does that you know -

- See also **Jonah** the prophet. God speaks to a great fish and commands it to swallow a prophet... the fish obeys.
- See also **Noah**, God commands the animals to enter the Ark two by two and they obediently comply.
- On another occasion, the disciples were sort of tax money. Jesus told Peter to cast a line into the water... not a net... a line. The first fish he caught had a coin in its mouth, just valuable enough to pay the tax they owed.

So think of it, Jesus first worked providentially to cause someone to throw a coin into the water. He then, commanded the fish to eat that coin. Then he caused that fish to bite Peter's hook at just the right time.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION: It was no difficult thing for Jesus to summon 1000's of fish into a net. If only we were as obedient as the fish of the sea!

There comes a point when such things happen and you simply have to believe.

Peter recognized that the man on his boat was more than a prophet, but he was the very Son of God.

ILLUSTRATION: Like Isaiah before him, when face to face with the eternal - he cries out woe is me. And like Isaiah before him, his sin is atoned for.

¹⁰ 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."¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

That seems to be an odd time to go out of the fishing business. You just had the greatest catch of your life. Why not hire Jesus as a silent partner?

Well - a recognition of who Jesus is, reorients everything Peter thought he knew up to that point. Whatever that man says - I must obey.